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WOMAN

AND

HER MASTER.

Morgan, Sydney (Owenson) Lady.

WOMAN

AND

HER MASTER.

BY LADY MORGAN.

"As the old law-phrase runs, Baron et Feme—the master and his woman."

BLACKSTONE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

PHILADELPHIA:

CAREY AND HART.

1840.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

The long delay which has occurred in the publication of "Woman and her Master" is solely attributable to an infirmity of vision; its ultimate appearance in a divided form has been the result of the same painful affliction;—the necessity of temporary repose having been suggested by one, to whose eminent skill and unremitting attention I stand indebted for the comparative recovery of the most precious of the organs.

The disadvantage of dividing the work into two distinct publications is manifest, particularly as its strict adherence to chronological order obliged me to bring before the public that portion which, by its remoter associations, may be deemed the least interesting.

Still, by stopping short upon the very frontier of a new epoch in society (the land of promise to the graphic historian), I have yet followed the natural break in history itself. I have further endeavoured to give to the two first volumes as much of the design of the entire work as will form something like a distinct whole, as I shall preserve in the two last the same character of unity and independence. As I have taken the advice of the fabulist, "Mon ami le belier, commencez au commencement," and begun with the beginning, it is my hope and my intention to conclude with the conclusion. And, should that light be spared me, without which none work cheerily, and few (save the inspired) work at all, I shall only stop at that point which Time itself has but just touched—the age we live in!

To that age and its glorious spirit of inquiry I appeal, in the full confidence that it will "hear me for my cause;" for,

in spite of the consecrated axioms of the "wisdom of our ancestors," the true "age of chivalry," where woman is concerned, is *that* in which the highest developement of science bears evidence to her natural claims to all the social benefits and civil rights which, in darker and more unlettered ages, have been assumed, under the supremacy of physical force, to have been the exclusive prerogative of her master.

SYDNEY MORGAN.

London, March 20, 1840.

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WOMAN AND HER MASTER.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

WOMAN.

"Ce sexe, que nous bornons à des emplois obscurs et domestiques, ne serait il pas destiné à des fonctions plus nobles et plus relevées? N'a-t-il pas donné des exemples de courage, de sagesse, de progrès dans toutes les vertus, et dans tous les arts? Peut-être que ses qualités se ressentent de sa faiblesse, et sont inférieures aux nôtres: s'ensuit-il qu'elles doivent être inutiles à la patrie? Non, la nature ne dispense aucun talent pour le rendre sterile; et le grand art du legislateur est de remettre en jeu tous les ressorts qu'elle fournit, et que nous laissons en repos."—*Plato de Republica—As cited by the Abbé Barthélemy.*

THE chronicles of six thousand years, the records of the known world, lie open for the benefit and the wonder of mankind, preserving, in pages indited by the lights of their respective times, monuments of the ignorance, the timidity, and the credulity, of successive generations.

From the earliest aggregations of society, man, in his shallow pride, has laboured to perpetuate the memory of his own imperfection, the story of his selfishness and his errors; and the annals which he has bequeathed from age to age, for the benefit of posterity, are but evidences of the long and painful struggles, by which the human species, on isolated points, and for periods brief and remote, have succeeded in partially escaping from physical evil, and from moral darkness.

It is thus the artless illuminations of antique missals, in preserving the rude outlines of the dark originals they were meant to honour, perpetuate, also, in vivid tints, that expression of feebleness and suffering, which is the inseparable characteristic of suspicious and unaccommodated ignorance in all ages.*

It was not till the close of a long and unmitigated reign of barbarism, even in regions most favourable to intellectual culture, that mind began at last to assume some supremacy over brute force; but, from its first inroad of inquiry upon the density of ignorance and prejudice, it has proceeded steadily onward in its high career, unsubdued by penalties and persecutions, undaunted by calumnies and contempt.

Neglected, when not discouraged, often repelled, and occasionally crushed, amidst the conflicts of races, and the fall of empires, science has receded only to advance; multiplying the blessings of physical existence to the species, and "purging the general weal" by its extorted truths. Before its luminous progress, many maladies have disappeared, many crimes have fallen into dissuetude; and vices, once boastfully indulged, are now scarcely breathed. Society has become less cruel; and the appetite for blood, the ferocious instinct of semi-civilized man, has diminished. The scaffold is less frequently erected, the stake has been torn up; the fagot has been quenched; and the rack and the wheel, banished from codes (once miscalled) of justice, are now preserved with other relics of older times, as warnings to illustrate a principle, as images to enforce its observance.

The monopoly of knowledge is no longer cloistered and exclusive; and, if all those who run may not read, and all who live have not at their disposition the means of learning, yet a respect for education and a desire for its acquisition are in active operation throughout all the great European communities, and penetrating all classes of society.

Under this mighty influence, the relations of time and space to human power have been changed, till minutes

* Obvious even in the fine heads of Cimabue and Giotto.

comprise the labours of days; facts have been substituted for figments, and experiment for learning; and, above all, the intellectual machine itself, released from its scholastic trammels, and worked in obedience to its own laws, like the mechanic engine of modern improvement, realizes, with certainty and precision, effects which the combined exertions of past ages were inadequate to accomplish. Mind, the universal mind, is now every where in action, producing new and endless combinations, political, moral, and material; and, though the interests of a few, or the lingering prejudices of the many, may oppose and delay its march, still (as the martyr of physical truth was heard to mutter when he left the tribunal of his inquisitors for his dungeon), *e pure si muove.*

Much, however, as has been effected, that progress serves but to disclose the more that remains to be done. As the acquirement of a physical elevation, in expanding the sphere of vision, and opening new and vast regions to the sense, obscures and diminishes the individual details comprehended in its grasp; so, that intellectual and moral elevation, which has opened to the mind's eye the wider fields of scientific research and of social combination, has caused the relative value of the smaller facts presented to its apprehension to be either overlooked, or mistaken. Society has become complicated more rapidly than philosophy and legislation can follow: the actions of man upon man, and those of the species upon nature, have multiplied faster than observation can co-ordinate, or reason control; until a positive advance has assumed the appearance of a relative retrogradation.

A large and formidable sum of suffering, therefore, still subsists in the bosom of the most civilized communities, untouched by science, unmitigated by laws. Crimes necessitated and inevitable, are still committed with a fearful regularity, and in pre-assignable proportions. The arithmetic of statistics can foreshow the numbers of the victims of violence, and determine the instruments of its perpetration.* It can calculate the minds that must de-

* See that curious and admirable work, "Sur l'Homme, ou Essai de la Physique Social," by Monsieur Quetelet, Astronomer Royal and Secretaire Perpetuel de l'Academie Royale de Bruxelles.

grade, the hearts which must break, the felons who must suffer, the suicides who must perish. The future murderer, while yet smiling in innocence on his mother's bosom, is already surrounded by the circumstances which foredoom him to crime; and the fair and blooming hope of many a parent's heart must tread her fated path to shame and reprobation, because institutions are still unexplored, and laws are at war with the ends for which they were enacted.

There are, then, still unmastered, some great impediments to the working of the social machinery; there are unfitnesses and incongruities obstructing its play, and clogging its movements, that are yet scarcely suspected. The discordant fragments of elder systems still remain, which work not smoothly with a newer principle of action. In the great and general progress of knowledge, much has been neglected, much overstepped; and, amidst the most beneficial reforms and sagacious improvements, great moral incoherences still linger, which require to be eleminated, before the interests of humanity can be based upon a system, consonant with nature, and conducive to general happiness.

But where lies the oversight? Can it be one, astounding in its obviousness, and all-important in its mischiefs? While codes have been reformed, institutes rationalized, and the interests of orders and classes have been minutely attended to, has one half of the human species been left, even to the present moment, where the first rude arrangements of a barbarous society and its barbarous laws had placed it. Is woman still a thing of sufferance and not of rights, as in the ignorant infancy of early aggregation, when the law of the strongest* was the only law acted on? and in the great impulsion to a regenerating reform, has that most applicable and intelligible instrument of social improvement and national well-being, has woman, been forgotten?

* "The husband, by the old law, might give his wife moderate correction; for, as he is to answer for her misbehaviour, the *law thought reasonable* to intrust him with this power of restraining her by domestic chastisement, allowing him—flagellis et fustibus acriter verberare uxorem," &c.—*Blackstone.*

Even now, when supremacy has been transferred from muscle to mind, has that most subtle spirit, that being of most mobile fibre, that most sensitive and apprehensive organization—has *she*, whom God has placed, to be a "mate and a help to man," at the head of his creation, the foundress of nations, the embellisher of races,* has she alone been left behind, at the very starting-post of civilisation, while around her all progresses and improves? And is man still "the master," and does he, by a misdirected self-love, still perpetuate her ignorance and her dependence, when her emancipation and improvement are most wanting, as the crowning element of his own happiness? If, in the progress of refinement he has brightened instead of breaking the chain of his slave, he has only linked a more showy nucleus of evil to his own destiny, and bound up, with his noblest views of national and social developement, a principle that too often thwarts the progress and enfeebles the results of his best reforms.

If, in the first era of society, woman was the victim of man's physical superiority, she is still, in the last, the subject of laws, in the enactment of which she has had no voice—amenable to the penalties of a code, from which she derives but little protection. While man, in his first crude attempts at jurisprudence, has surrounded the sex with restraints and disabilities, he has left its natural rights unguarded, and its liberty unacknowledged. Merging the very existence of woman in his own, he has allowed her no separate interest, assigned her no independent possessions: "for," says the law—the law of man—"the hus-

* "That the blood of the Persians is naturally gross, appears from the Guebres, who are a remnant of the ancient Persians, and are an ugly, ill-made, and rough-skinned people. But, in the other parts of the kingdom, the Persians' blood is now highly refined by frequent admixture with the Georgians and Circassians, two nations which surpass all the world in personal beauty. There is hardly a man of rank in Persia who is not born of a Georgian or Circassian mother; and even the king himself is commonly sprung, on the female side, from one or other of these nations. As it is long since this admixture commenced, the Persian women have become very beautiful, the men tall, noble, and graceful. But these qualities they inherit not from their remote progenitors; and, without the alliances alluded to above, the men of rank in Persia (as descendants of the Tartars) would be extremely ugly and deformed."—Chardin "Voyages en Perse," 1, 2. See Plates of Antiquities in Mr. Morier's "Travels in Persia."

band is the head of the wife, and all that she has belongs to him."* Even the fruit of her own labour is torn from her, unless she is protected by the solitary blessedness of a derided but innocent celibacy, or by an infamous frailty. Thus, (to adopt the barbarous jargon of these barbarous laws,) as *femme sole* or *femme couverte*, she is equally the victim of violence and injustice, those universal and invariable attributes of the law of the strongest.

But there is still a more terrible outrage committed against all that is most dear to her nature; she may be deprived of the possession of her own child—of that child, which, but an hour before, was shrined in her bosom, a portion of herself, flesh of her flesh, and bone of her bone—her infant may be torn from her while it is still drawing its nourishment from her breast, and while she is still "thanking the gods for all her labour past," as she gazes tenderly on its helplessness.

In the progress of moral improvement, it is true, some faint rays of light have broken on the darkness of these wrongs; and equity, the common sense of advancing civilisation, has endeavoured, by a system of fictions, to defeat the law. Timidly admitting the possible injustice of early institutes, it hesitatingly evades the consequences, and ventures not to touch the principle. Thus has the destiny of woman become only more complicated and uncertain; and rights, on which the nature of things has already decided, are kept for years at anxious issue, through the incoherences and contradictions of the machinery by which they have been bolstered, until a life of hope deferred may be worn out, before the industry and intelligence of its defenders can acquire a mastery of the case, and ripen it to a decision.†

But in vain has opinion, the new depository of power,

* "The very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or, at least, is incorporated or consolidated into that of the husband, under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs every thing (and is therefore called, in our law-French, a feme coverte, or covert Baron, or, under the protection and influence of her husband, her Baron, or Lord; and her condition during her marriage is called her coverture)."—*Blackstone.*

† See an Essay on the Equitable Rights of Married Women, by J. Clancy, Esq., Barrister-at-law.

the antagonist of physical force, opened its tribunals to the wrongs of the aggrieved! Even there her master meets her, citing against her what *he* calls philosophy and science; and if, even while these lines are tracing, a scanty measure of partial and reluctant amelioration has been wrung from the legislature, the exceptional fact has only been made an occasion for the sterner assertion of the outrageous principle. The natural dependence of the sex on its master, its imputed inaptitude for the higher intellectual pursuits, and presumed incapacity for concentration, are still insisted upon; and, while woman is permitted to cultivate the arts which merely please, and which frequently corrupt, she is denounced as a thing unsexed, a *lusus naturæ*, if she directs her thoughts to pursuits which aspire to serve, and which never fail to elevate.

Educating her for the Harem, but calling on her for the practices of the Portico, man expects from his odalisque the firmness of the stoic, and demands from his servant the exercise of those virtues which, placing the *élite* of his own sex at the head of its muster-roll, give immortality to the master. He tells her "that obscurity is *her* true glory, insignificance her distinction, ignorance her lot, and passive obedience the perfection of her nature;" yet he expects from her, as the daily and hourly habit of her existence, that conquest over the passions by the strength of reason, that triumph of moral energy over the senses and their appetites, and that endurance of personal privations and self-denials, which with him (even under all the excitements of ambition and incentives to renown) are qualities of rare exception, the practices of most painful acquirement.

Such has been the destiny of woman amongst the most highly-organized and intellectual of the human races, and in the regions most favourable to their moral developement. Among the inferior varieties, and in less temperate regions, she is even yet more degraded and helpless. The object and the victim of a brutal sensuality, her life passes in humiliating restriction and debasing ignorance; while her death is not unusually an act of murderous violence, or of refined torture.

But how has this Pariah of the species, this alien to

law, this dupe of fictions and subject of force—how has she felt, how acted, how borne the destiny assigned her? Has she bowed her head to the yoke with tame acquiescence, as one for whose nature it was fitted and adapted? or has she, as slave, concubine, or wife, felt and protested? Has she not, under the corrupting influence of oppression, sometimes converted those qualities of her sex, which were designed as the supplement of the intellectual system of the species, as an aid to man in his war with the elements, into weapons against him? Has not her quick apprehension often degenerated into cunning under his misrule? Has she not, in discovering how little was to be hoped from his justice, succeeded in founding an empire over his passions? And has not man, who denies every right that interferes with his own supremacy, submitted to the spell which undermines it; and, by thus giving influence, direct or indirect, where he has withheld knowledge and denied rights, established an insidious, ignorant tyranny, that perpetually thwarts his own designs, injures the best interests of society, and retards its progress to reform?

Still, notwithstanding her false position, woman has struggled through all disabilities and degradations, has justified the intentions of Nature in her behalf, and demonstrated her claim to share in the moral agency of the world. In all outbursts of mind, in every forward rush of the great march of improvement, she has borne a part; permitting herself to be used as an instrument, without hope of reward, and faithfully fulfilling her mission, without expectation of acknowledgment. She has, in various ages, given her secret services to her task-master, without partaking in his triumph, or sharing in his success. Her subtlety has insinuated views which man has shrank from exposing, and her adroitness found favour for doctrines, which he had the genius to conceive, but not the art to divulge. Priestess, prophetess, the oracle of the tripod, the sibyl of the cave, the veiled idol of the temple, the shrouded teacher of the academy, the martyr or missionary of a spiritual truth, the armed champion of a political cause, she has been covertly used for every purpose, by which man, when he has failed to reason his species into truth, has endeavoured to fanaticise it into good; when-

ever mind has triumphed by indirect means over the inertia of masses.

In all moral impulsions, woman has aided and been adopted; but, her efficient utility accomplished, the temporary part assigned her for temporary purposes performed, she has been ever hurled back into her natural obscurity, and conventional insignificance: no law against her has been repealed, no injury redressed, no right admitted. Alluded to, rather as an incident than a principal in the chronicles of nations, her influence, which cannot be denied, has been turned into a reproach; her genius, which could not be concealed, has been treated as a phenomenon, when not considered as monstrosity!

But where exist the evidences of these merits unacknowledged, of these penalties unrepealed? They are to be found carelessly scattered through all that is known in the written history of mankind, from the first to the last of its indited pages. They may be detected in the habits of the untamed savage, in the traditions of the semi-civilized barbarian! and in those fragments of the antiquity of our antiquity, scattered through undated epochs,—monuments of some great moral *débris*, which, like the fossil remains of a long-imbedded and unknown species, serve to found a theory, or to establish a fact.

Wherever woman has been, there has she left the track of her humanity, to mark her passage—incidentally impressing the seal of her sensibility and her wrongs upon every phasis of society, and in every region, "from Indus to the Pole."

Humbly but "fearlessly" to plead her cause, and to illustrate her agency, by traits more graphic than didactic, is the object of the following pages.

CHAPTER II.

The Women of Savage life. Of Semi-civilized Tribes.

TOWARDS the commencement of the sixteenth century, the accidents of civilisation awakened throughout Europe an universal zeal for maritime discovery. A geographical theory took possession of the public mind, that there stood out, at the southern pole of the earth, some great continent, (named, before it was discovered, *Terra Australis incognita*), which, from its mighty extent, deserved to be considered as a fifth division of the globe.

Of this continent much was assumed before any thing was proved. Its latitudes were assigned, its importance predetermined; and some visionary voyagers even believed that they had coasted a part of its shores. In later times, navigators ascertained that no such continent existed: but, in the vain pursuit, numerous islands were discovered in the mighty ocean of the southern hemisphere, whose aggregate extent was scarcely inferior; and science and research, in replacing the dream of idle speculation by observed fact, in some sense confirmed its conjectures. These islands have received from modern geographers the name of Australasia.

The climes and local aspects of this island-continent were infinitely diversified; but all was new, all was original. There was, however, one division which seemed wanting in the foregone conclusions, drawn, of the general beauty and brightness of nature, in that region,—a spot where vegetation was dark and dull, and where animal life bore scarce any resemblance to the types of the other quarters of the globe. The foliage was coriaceous and spiny; the fruits ligneous and devoid of nutriment; and nothing recalled the majesty of the virgin forests of the western world, or the rich variety of the vegetable genera of the East. The birds, the quadrupeds, and the fishes, partook equally of these characteristics; the hideous am-

phibious mole, the frightful wombat, the wild dog that looked and howled a wolf, squirrels which flew, swans that were black, and various other specimens of helpless deformity and monstrous vitality, proper only to the spells of witchcraft—the poetry of disgusting terror.

Nor was man himself an exception: the lord of a soil, which seemed thus created by another power than that which moulded the elegant form of the antelope, and brightened the eye of the gazel, he was not formed to resemble those godlike creatures, whose high aspirations banished them their Eden, to people a scarcely less paradisaical earth with races of angelic form and glorious mind;* he seemed of another creation, a specimen apart from man. In his person he was all deformity and disproportion; in his intellectual frame he was all density and insensibility. His head was immense and misshapen, his eyes dim and sunk, his brows bushy, and his mouth, (frightful as that of a crocodile) opened extravagantly wide to show enormous teeth above a prominent lower jaw. His nose was flat, his nostrils wide, his colour swarthy, his hair long and straight, his limbs dwindled, his trunk swollen, and his whole aspect horrible and disgusting. Thus framed by nature, his appearance was still further degraded by the symbols of brutal taste, and of fierce cruelty, with which he adorned his unsightly person. The teeth of men or of kangaroos were fastened in his gum-clotted hair; the bones of fish were stuck through his nostrils! and incisions made in his arms and breasts marked his callous insensibility to pain.

"Naked and unaccommodated," he was indifferent to the inclemencies of clime and season, and inapprehensive of decency: humanity has in vain interfered to improve his native condition; and civilisation has failed to draw him within her lines. As huntsman, he still made the hollow of a tree his den; as fisherman, a hole in the rock his dwelling. He slept, like the wild beast of the forest, the

* Blumenbach is inclined to believe that the primitive form of the human race was that which belongs to the Caucasian variety: from the finely formed head of this race, as from a primitive configuration, the other forms descend by an easy and simple gradation, on the one hand to the Mongolian, on the other to the Ethiopian variety.

deep sleep of fatigue and surfeit; and he awakened, without forethought or fear of the coming day, to destroy, or to be destroyed, with equal indifference.

Human nature could go no lower: yet this defective and ill-conditioned creature, this unideal and unawakened animal, had one strong moral conviction—that of his own superiority over the female of his own species!

He believed that woman was of another nature from himself, and that he was born her master—she his servant by the divine right of the strongest. He marked her at the hour of her birth for his slave, by breaking the joints of her fore-fingers; he renewed the covenant of his supremacy in her first youth by knocking out her front teeth; and when he elected this bond-slave as the object of his passions, he intimated his preference by spitting in her face, and forcing her to his den. Thus affianced through contempt and suffering, the servant submitted, and the master assumed, uncontrolled, a power of life, death, and property over her.* He loaded her shoulders (wounded by his stripes) with weights which his own indolence refused to bear, and speared her to the earth, if she resisted the imposition.

It is curious to inquire into the nature of the creature thus subjugated and ill-treated. "In the women of New Holland," (says a modern voyager) "that feminine delicacy, which is to be found among white people, was to be traced in their dusky cheeks; and though the female, like the male, may be seen in the streets of Sydney and Paramatta, scarcely more draped by the hand of modesty than the first mother in Paradise, yet the habit of their savage state has not extinguished all instinct and moral feeling—for they blush."

These victims of violence, then, have a moral feeling; they have, too, as all writers on their nation declare, a devotedness, the general characteristic of their sex of all

* "Their remorseless cruelty, their unfeeling barbarity to their women and children, their immoderate revenge for the most trivial affronts, their want of natural affection, are hardly redeemed by the slightest trait of goodness. They are insensible to all distinctions, and without any idea of a supreme being and a future state."—*Lawrence on the Natural History of Man.* Peron also observes "that the natives of Van Diemen's Land are the most wretched examples of the rudest barbarism."

races; and amidst all the sufferings they endure, and all the wrongs to which they submit, they are the depositaries of what little virtue distinguishes their tribe from the brutes of the field. Such is the relation of the sexes in the last discovered specimens of humanity, the unclassed race of an unknown creation, the "woman and her master" of the southern regions.

Passing to the further extremity of the globe, across the world of waters of the great Pacific, to the vast tracts in the northern regions of America, tribes are still found living in their primitive savagery, as when they were first discovered by Columbus. Centuries of suspicious intercourse have passed between the Europeans and the Red Man of North America; yet there he is, as he was first discovered (probably as he was first formed) roaming for subsistence among those mighty mountains which "unchain the winds," and threading those gloomy forests which embosom inland seas, to share with the beasts of prey the gentler races of frugivorous animals.

Inacessible to the improvements of civilisation, though passionately addicted to its vices, sensual, selfish, slothful, sullen, and saturnine, the Red Man is only to be roused from his lair to wage a fierce warfare for food, or for security; and, in those beautiful tracts where intelligent industry would have created abundance, he escapes famine by carnage only. His dwindling tribes are rapidly disappearing, through the havoc of their own untameable passions and wasteful violence. Where to-day he stood ferocious and powerful, to-morrow not a trace of his savage existence is to be found; where his warriors were lately congregated in fierce array, the rank grass of the prairie now flourishes spontaneously; and the trophy of scalps so proudly and recently erected by the hero of "the bloody mouth," is not more perishable and ephemeral, than he whose prowess and triumphs it was destined to commemorate.

The brief and the bloody story of the Red Man of the northern hemisphere, the destroyer and the destroyed, is thus soon told. Yet he, too, all savage as he is, has a seeming consciousness of some divine law, authorizing him to assume a despotic supremacy over the female of his

species. Wallowing in indolence, when not wallowing in blood, he leaves to the woman, his servant, all the labour, forethought, and ingenuity, necessary for the wants of his savage interior; and he lies basking before his proud "standard of the pheasant," or shaded by his broad shield of the buffalo, while his woman performs the drudgery of a beast of burthen, in the consciousness of her inability to resist the violence and tyranny of her master.

Still the suffering servant of the Red Man of the North, like the slave of the dark man of Australia, is described by all writers, and recently by one of the most distinguished, as a creature eminently endowed with moral sensibility.* She distinguishes the brave from the craven, and loves and imitates the only virtue which adorns her master; for she is an admirer of glory, and has a rude appreciation of renown. She has a moral courage, too,† that supports her under the most arduous enterprises. She is moved by a deep, devoted tenderness for the child of her bosom; exercising in its rearing and education, a providence, a forecast, and a self-denial, sometimes wanting in the mothers of a more policized society.

Among the numerous nomadic tribes which occupy central and northern Asia, woman ranges on a still lower degree in the scale of consideration. Regarded as a necessary evil, as a creature inferior to man, and odious to the gods, her fine maternal organization, the cause of her intellectual excellence, renders her only the object of pro-

* The female of the Esquimaux (who belongs to the American variety) appears to have, in common with the woman of the South Sea Islands, a more delicate fabric than the male; and "her eloquent blood" is often seen bearing testimony to her more sentient nature. "The complexion of the male Esquimaux" (says Chappell) "is of a dusky yellow, but some young women have a little colour bursting through this dark tint. The smallness of their hands and feet is also remarkable."—*Narrative of a Voyage to Hudson's Bay.*

† A Sioux squaw is described in the Astoria of Washington Irving as possessing the highest qualities of resignation and devotedness. "Her fortitude, patience, and resignation shone out conspicuously, even among the robust and well-seasoned fellows who composed the band. On her journey she brought forth a child; the following day she joined the party to which her husband was attached, and proceeded on the journey. Her fortitude never deserted her, though exposed to the brutal violence of her savage husband; and her courage, which was continually put to trying tests, bore her through every calamity unflinching."

found contempt; and the delicate and complicated arrangements, which, in the estimate of superior natures, rank her as "Heaven's last best work," mark her out to her lord as the predestined agent of his lowest appetites, the victim of his capricious violence and wanton cruelty. The wretched condition of the Siberian women, more especially, is attested by all writers who have made the inferior nature of the Mongol man the subject of their inquiry; and the story of this portion of the human species is one uninterrupted series of hardship and humiliation, in which every evil and mortification that can embitter and degrade is accumulated.

By a strange inconsistency, however, these victims of injustice, these patient bond-slaves, who as wives are repudiated, as slaves are sold, who are debased, tortured, and put to death at the caprice of their task-masters, are not the less objects of superstitious fear, as presumed possessors of a mysterious power, arising in some undefined intellectual superiority, some sorceress-like enchantment, which holds in awe and apprehension their tyrants and oppressors. Whatever accident befalls their master, whatever evil overshadows his path, which his dense dulness cannot otherwise account for, he never-failingly assigns to the spell of some over-wise woman of his tribe: and unable, as he believes, to cope with her intellectual superiority, he flies for refuge to superior brute force; putting to death, without trial or accusation, the magician he suspects, and the victim he fears.

But how fares it with woman in that burning region, whose children bask in eternal sunshine, where the blood flows through the throbbing veins in volcanic torrents, where no iceberg chills, no snow-storm freezes, where the coasts are sanded with gold, and the bosom of the earth is studded with diamonds! What is woman in Africa, what the daughters of the African aborigines, the Negroes —the darkest illustrations of the Ethiopian variety!*

The Negro, with his low, narrow, and slanting fore-

* According to Blumenbach, there are five varieties of the human species;—the Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopian, American, and Malay. The Caucasian (from Mount Caucasus) includes all the European nations, ancient and modern; the former and present inhabitants of Western

head, (the distinctive feature of mental deficiency) with all the brutal sensuality of the savage, and all the lowest vices of civilisation, simple, and unintelligent, is equally satisfied of his own superiority over the female, as the American or the Siberian—the same causes every where producing the same effects. Still, however, the African, like the Siberian, while he oppresses, feels that he fears; and, fearing, fancies that he despises her. As a father, he beats, barters, or kills her at discretion. As bridegroom, he receives her a slave into his hut; and his first order is to send her to fetch wood and water—a foretaste of her future servitude—a token that he is the master.

He scarcely shares with her his cabin, and never his board. Even the common wrong of West Indian slavery does not remove this distinction; for the Negress, in the sugar islands, as in her native Africa, presents on her knees the tobacco and drink, which her intelligent industry has prepared for her indolent husband. Lord of the ascendant in his native region, the male Negro hunts and fishes, makes and repairs the hut, constructs his own weapons, and sometimes manufactures clothes and ornaments for his family. Still the greater part of his time passes in idleness and in smoking; while to the female he consigns all the various toils of agriculture and domestic service. The patient laborious Negress tills, and sows, and reaps (often with one infant at her back, and another at her bosom); she gathers and weaves the cotton, and prepares the maize, the millet, and the tobacco. She rears also the domestic animals, carries in the wood, and fetches the water, and is at once the providence of her master and his victim.

Even the women of the Barbaric chiefs and kings are not always exempt from these labours; and when time destroys their powers, or satiety marks them for disgust, they are sold in the European slave-market, or hurried to a premature grave by aggravated brutality and misusage. Amidst all this violence and injustice, the moral influence

Asia (including Chaldeans, Jews, Persians, Arabians, &c.) The moral feelings and intellectual powers of this variety are susceptible of the highest developement and culture; their white complexions and symmetric forms present the most perfect type, the beau ideal of poetry and art.

of the female is still felt and feared: for the Negro, in common with the Mongol and the American, is possessed of a jealous dread of the sex, for which he tries not to account—an apprehension of powers beyond the reach of his physical force to subdue or to counteract.

To the Negroes, the mind, or rather the temperament, of woman is a fearful mystery; and by a fearful mystery they endeavour to meet it. For this purpose the males enter into a horrid covenant of secrecy and revenge, forming a tribunal not unworthy the suspicious despotism of more civilized, though scarcely more corrupted society. They have invented a secret language, which it is death to the other sex to learn, and which is employed for concealing the meditated vengeance, that female penetration might otherwise discover and evade. The machinery of this system is as rude as the minds which invented it. It consists in the agency of an avenging demon, whom the women are taught to believe is a wild man or monster; or whom they affect to regard in that light—the penalty of their scepticism being torture, or death.

This frightful deity of the husband's altars, known by the name of Mumbojumbo, is a man disguised in horrible attire, and raised by a crown of straw to a gigantic and supernatural height. Woe to the wretched woman, who (however innocent) hears on the wind the well-known midnight howl of Mumbojumbo! The first terrific sound urges her flight; but she flies in vain. The monster-god and his attendant demons soon overtake her. She is seized, scourged, or murdered, according to the nature of her crime, her disobedience, or her heresy. For Negresses *have* been found, who have sought knowledge at its dearest price, who have penetrated the mystery of Mumbojumbo, and even dared to whisper to their wretched partners in slavery, that the creed of their masters was an absurdity, that his grotesque god was a fabrication, and that their own subjection was the injurious motive of the gross and puerile invention: thus marking the difference between minds, even in the same race, when developed by the inherent sensibility peculiar to one sex, or brutified by the consciousness of superior physical force possessed by the other.

CHAPTER III.

The Women of the East. The Women of Oriental Antiquity, Traditional and Historical. Of India, and China. Of Assyria, and Egypt.

THE sufferings and the wrongs of woman among the savage tribes of the inferior races, however separated by origin or by distance, every where alike exhibit her and her master in the same relation—in that of slave and tyrant—a relation determined by physical causes, and by that pressure of externals, to which the male organization is the most successfully opposed. The possession of power awakens the selfishness of man in all races and in all climes, developing tendencies, which a high civilisation and an enlightened morality alone can regulate and adjust.

But the position of the woman of savage life, miserable as it may be, is less strikingly degraded than that of the females of those vast empires of the East, which vaunt an antique origin, and in which the lights of a semi-civilisation have surrounded a fraction at least of the species with the luxuries of wealth, and afforded something of the semblance of a social policy. Of the earliest condition of these widely extended nations nothing is known; and the few scattered fragments of their history which have reached posterity show them as then already far removed from the rudeness of savage life. In these fragments, the records of ages when civilisation was as yet exclusively confined to Asia, (the supposed cradle of the human species, and, certainly, the cradle of its written history), physical pressure of another character and origin is found to determine the servitude of woman, and to crush her under a slavery, if possible, more revolting than that of the mere savage.

The precocious developement of the maternal organization, which, in some Oriental countries, confounds infancy with motherhood, and leaves the functions of the brain

imperfect, while the affections and the passions are already matured, may be assigned as the origin of polygamy—that institute which has the most impeded the progress of society, wherever it has been perpetuated.

It is an awful and heart-rending act to raise the dark curtain which hangs before "the sanctuary of the women," throughout the great continent of Asia, and to penetrate the domestic holds of those vainglorious nations, which arrogate to themselves the precedence in creation, and date their power and their policy from eras, anterior to the written records of more civilized communities. In these states, on whose condition the passage of some thousands of years has impressed no change, and in which the sufferings of one half the species have awakened no sympathy, may be discovered the most graphic illustrations of the tyranny of man, and of the degradation of woman. There, the sexes, in their mutual relations, are still where the earliest necessities of the species first placed them; perpetuating, by their false position, the barbarous rudiments of primeval society. The sin of polygamy, still unredeemed in the East, dries up the fountains of human sensibility, and crushes every better impulse of feeling,—annihilating even the hope of political liberty, and leaving the wisest legislative reformer, at best but a happy accident, if not an anomaly and a discord.

In the Zenana of the modern Hindoo, woman is still reared the slave of the most frightful superstition, the victim of the most selfish institutes which man has yet devised. Frail, her infidelity to her lord is punished by a living burial: faithful, her constancy is rewarded by a place on his funeral pyre: her life and death, alike a violence to nature, an outrage to society, and a mortifying evidence of the incapacity of some races for improvement and reform.*

In the Persian Harem, and the Turkish Seraï, the story of the victims devoted on the altars of man's sensuality and cruelty is briefly and bitterly told: ignorance, corruption, incarceration; infants murdered, mothers maddened;

* While this page was writing, the papers announced the horrible sacrifice of a young and beautiful Hindoo wife, burned alive with the body of her aged husband.

for the unfaithful, the sack, the bowstring, or the tower; for the true, satiety, neglect, and untimely death. For this existence of pains, and penalties, and privations, what are the compensations? a toy, a flower, a sweetmeat, and, above all, a smile from those lips which might pronounce death to the dearest, or extinction of sight to the brightest.

But there is a pompous and a pedantic land, which boasts supremacy in wisdom and in science from an epoch anterior to all human record save its own—China, the land of many letters, of many lanterns, and of few ideas. Peopled by the long-eared, elliptic-eyed, flat-nosed, olive-coloured, Mongolian race, it offers a population singularly deficient in intellectual physiognomy; though, to its absurd ugliness, the women of the higher classes occasionally offer striking exceptions.*

In China, polygamy prevails virtually, if not by name; and the sovereign, self-imprisoned in his golden-roofed palace, with his one empress, six queens, and three hundred (or, if he please, three thousand) concubines, reflects, on the great scale, the domestic establishment of those among his subjects, whose wealth may permit the irrational indulgence of their passion or their pride. The female slave, who, at the head of a band of inferior slaves, is dignified with the name of superior (adequate to that of wife), who has been purchased with gold, and may be returned, if on trial not approved, is not deemed worthy to eat at her master's table. Crippled from her cradle, morally and physically, ignorant of any one of the many thousand letters of her husband's alphabet, referred to the futile amusements of infancy for all resource against utter tedium, to dress and to smoke are her highest pleasures; and to totter on the flat roof of her golden cage her sole privilege. She, too, feeble and imbecile as she is, is outraged in the only feeling that nature may have rescued from the wreck of man's oppression: for the Chinese wife, like the odalisque of Turkey, yields up her offspring a sacrifice to the murderous policy of her master.

If such is the destiny of the lady of the celestial empire,

* "We saw women in China (though few) who might pass for beauties even in Europe."—*Travels in China*, p. 183-5.

beauty = superiority?

the woman of the middle and the lower classes submits to a yet severer fate. She it is who feeds and rears the silk-worm, with an attention to details of which the female organization is so pre-eminently capable; she reels the produce, and works and weaves the silk. It is the woman, too, who cultivates the most tender tea-plants, and whose delicate fingers are alone fitted to roll the finer tea-leaf: having thus furnished her quota to the common means of national wealth, she also works that exquisite gold and silver filigree, and prepares those gorgeous ornaments, in which imperial vanity delights to adorn the ponderous and puerile divine-righted ruler of the celestial empire.

Descending yet lower in the social chain, the female peasant of China presents a still more extraordinary example of plodding industry. Exposed to the inclemency of the seasons, with the infant tied to her back, which she may have rescued from the wild beast, or from the devouring wave, she ploughs, sows, reaps, and performs the thousand offices of toil and drudgery attached to the cultivation of the soil, from which she derives so little benefit and enjoyment. Denied, too, all moral rights, she incurs, nevertheless, a fatal responsibility for her husband's delinquencies; and suffers death with him, as his dependent, for crimes in which she could have no moral participation. The natural death of her husband gives her over to the family, who, to recover the money expended in her purchase, may resell her to the highest bidder; while her own is very frequently the work of her own hand. Suicide, it is asserted, is of frequent occurrence among the Chinese females of the lowest classes; and well may they seek death, to whom, from the cradle to the tomb, life holds forth not one solitary good.

Other Eastern states, less policized, or less self-important, exhibit fearful examples of the dire results of polygamy, its outrage and degradation towards one half of the species, its brutalizing reaction on the other. Still, through ages of suffering and injustice, the numbing influence of custom, which for ever confounds establishment with fitness, did not *so* extinguish the sense of right in its victims, but that some vague traditionary dogma was required to justify the institutes perpetuated by the master against his servant.

If the Hindoo woman, all palpitating with life and feeling, was buried or burned alive at her husband's will, a page was quoted from the ancient story of the nation, denouncing some cunning combination among the women to escape from the dominion of the strongest, by the murder of their husbands, which necessitated the merging of the woman's existence in that of her lord. If the Chinese crushed the feet and paralysed the intellects of their women, the practice was traced back to some supposed time, when the females, left free to walk and to act, had conspired against the eternal government of the celestial empire, and sought to establish a female supremacy. Either as fact, or as a mythological fable, the notion of some attempt on the part of woman to escape from thraldom, through the exercise of her subtle and insinuating faculties, and to found a forbidden empire on a superiority of knowledge, seems to have prevailed throughout the East from the earliest times; amounting to an admission of the wrongs inflicted upon the sex, and to an acknowledgment in it of inherent faculties and powers, only to be counteracted by such coarse and brutal expedients as have been so generally applied to them.

That any such general combination of the females against the males did really occur, is more than problematical; but, setting aside that hypothesis, it is certain that the earliest portion of Oriental history, called the Heroic, has left behind it the memory of splendid and particular instances of woman's moral supremacy—instances in which woman has determined the destinies of empires, advanced the march of civilisation, and effected more than enough to awaken the jealousy and provoke the obloquy implied in that supposition.

In all that is known of Assyria, the most ancient empire of the earth,* every extant fragment, moral or material, bears evidence in favour of a sex to which that land of wonders owes the immortality of its grandeur. The name

* "Behold," (says the Prophet) "behold the Chaldæans, these people were not, till the Assyrians founded it, for them that dwelt in the wilderness: they set up the towns thereof, they built the palaces thereof." It was from Ur of the Chaldees, that Abraham, whose fathers dwelt on the other side of the Euphrates, and served other gods, was led into the land of Canaan.

of Semiramis has preserved (what Sardanapalus could not destroy, nor Cyrus bury under the ruins of Babylon) the memory of the greatest combination of wealth, power, art, and magnificence, which the world had till then witnessed, or has since conceived. For the greatest capitals of the most powerful and refined of modern states, supposed to have reached the acme of civilisation, have but one epithet to mark their supereminence; and Rome and London (in boast, or in reproach,) have each been called the Babylon of their own proudest times.

Babylon, with its hundred gates and towers, was founded by a woman of low origin and destitute youth, who attained to supreme power by her genius alone; and though all that has been ascribed to her may not be strictly true, though Diodorus Siculus in his enthusiasm may have exaggerated, and Ctesias* may have too vividly coloured his brilliant delineations of her greatness, yet that such a woman lived and reigned in Assyria, that she founded its capital and influenced her age by her works and her talents, that she built cities, raised aqueducts, constructed roads, commanded great armies in person, and, both as conqueror and legislator, was among the earliest agents of Asiatic civilisation, there remains no room for historic doubt.

Her passage over the Indus, her conquests on its shores, the brilliant triumph she obtained abroad, the astute wisdom with which she met conspiracy at home, and the bold confidence she expressed in the decisions of posterity, are stubborn facts. These obtained for her the sympathy of the greatest character and conqueror of a nearer antiquity; but Alexander, taking Semiramis for his model, vainly tried to restore her gorgeous city, on her own plans, and with her own views.

Posterity has nobly ratified the appeal of Semiramis to its verdict: at the end of three thousand years her life and character have been taken as the inspiration of its genius, and the spell of its attraction. Semiramis, however, has paid the penalty of her sex's superiority, and

* Ctesias of Gnidos, historian and physician; of his writings nothing remains but some fragments of the History of the Assyrians and the Persians.

has been the mark of calumnious pedantry through succeeding ages.

Tirolli, in his "Antiquities,"* observes of her, "*de hac bestia incredibilia narrantur et inenarrabilia:*" but in recounting the proofs which the ancients have handed down of her greatness, he adds a trait of his own still more marvellous and incredible. "*Filium Trebetum,*" he tells us, "*regno expulit et fugavit ad fluenta Rheni usque, qui Treverim illuc condidit et de suo nomine dixit:*" she banished her son Trebetus, and drove him to the banks of the Rhine, where he founded Treves, and called it after his own name! ! !

But, while the genius and the grandeur of the immortal queen of Assyria is thus bound up with all that is known of the greatest and most ancient empire of the earth, there are fragments of the history of other Eastern nations, which, like the lingering fires of expiring volcanoes throw up, here and there, flashes to brighten the darkness of woman's destiny, and show her able and prompt to justify the original intention of nature in her favour. It is related in the brief story of the Cretans and of the Syrians, that their national genealogy was carried on from mother to daughter, the bearers and bestowers of the family cognomen, and the inheritors of its wealth.

Women, too, in ancient Crete, presided over the companies into which the population was divided. In the time of Xerxes (one of recent date as compared to the ages alluded to), the prejudice in favour of Cretan women was so great, that Artemisia (who could prove her Cretan descent from the mother's side) was accepted as a leader in the army of Xerxes, and a member of his council. Her sagacious advice to the headlong prince might have saved him at Salamis, had he adopted it; and it was in watching her efforts at the head of his fleet, that he exclaimed, "The men have this day behaved like women, and the women are behaving like men."†

* Tirolli Antiquitates, MS. in Eton College library, a finely illuminated work in Latin, with a German translation beneath, written about the time of the Emperor Charles V.: it contains a history of the World, from the time of Noah!!!

† The fragment of a society, so constituted, still survives on the coast of Malabar, in the military tribes of Nairs, where the succession follows

When the existence of Troy itself remains a mystery and a doubt, the tale of Cassandra, her genius and her fate, cannot be cited as a direct proof of the position of the Asiatic women in that city. Still, as a mere poetical conception, embodying an ancient tradition, it may be adopted as implying a prevalent opinion of wisdom and forethought in the sex, to which it assigns the divine honours of prophecy; and as an impersonation of the female character, according to the notions imported into Greece by the Asiatic colonies, and recorded in the immortal poem of one of their earliest descendants.

The records of Persia establish the fact that polygamy reigned unrestrained from its earliest times, except in the royal harems, where the kings' wives were limited in their number, and enjoyed many of the high privileges which distinguish the Greek women of more modern ages. They were entrusted with high prerogatives, assigned provinces for the expenses of their dress and the maintenance of their households; they were solemnly crowned with the royal diadem, and draped with the purple robe, the insignia of royal power. They sat on the right hand of the king, in the presence of the representatives of prostrate nations; their sons alone could ascend the throne of their fathers; and at one epoch of their history they gave a royal rank to their sons, which the husbands of these powerful women had not assumed.

The immortal Mandane,* the mother of Cyrus, may thus be considered as the foundress of the Persian dynasty; and the Jewish Esther, raised to the throne of Darius, and permitted to exert a political influence, is evidence of the general condition of the royal wives of Persia, which must have afforded a precedent for that elevation. The

the female line. In the battle of Assaye, fought by the Duke of Wellington, in 1803, against the Mahrattas, a female, the Begum of Lumroom, fought with the enemy, at the head of her cavalry;—a strange anomaly, in that quarter of the globe, where the sex is most despised and trampled on.

* Herodotus asserts that the birthright and glory of Cyrus came from his mother, and that his father was a man of obscure birth. The Emperors of Persia, like those of modern Turkey, are prohibited by Mahometan dispensation from having legitimate wives. Political reasons and other causes are assigned to justify this great source of demoralization. See Chardin, vol. iii, page 39.

Greek writers ascribe to the women of various Eastern countries, at this period, prerogatives which would in vain be sought among the institutions of the same region in modern times;* and Herodotus observes that, "among various nations of Africa, the rank of nobility descended in the female line, so that the children of a noble Lydian woman inherited the nobility of their mother's caste, even when the father was a plebeian or a slave."

But, amidst these *débris* of the history of undated times, through which fragments of a legislation favourable to woman's rights are most apparent, one mighty monument stands out in the institutions of Egypt, a moral pyramid, raised to the honour of the sex by the most highly organized of races!

Egypt, that land where man was wisest,—Egypt, from whose intellectual fires† Greece and Rome borrowed the lights, by which worlds then unguessed at, and races then unknown, have since learned the laws of Nature and the philosophy of morals,—Egypt, from her remotest existence, assumed the female form, as the representative of a superintending Providence; and gave to Isis a homage, which the assigned co-partner of her divinity, Osiris, never received.

The image of a young mother, with a child on her bosom, Isis, suckling the infant Horus, was to the initiated of the Egyptians a personification of Nature; or rather, this worship offered to the "queen of Heaven," the "mother of the universe," of "gods and men,"‡ was addressed to the great source of the imperishable elements, the essence of life itself;§ a pure theism, at variance with the gross and sensual idolatry of the people. After an interval of many thousand years, the sublime fragments of the Temple of Tentyra, as they rise, in their ruined

* Meiners, vol. i.

† In the Egyptian Pantheon, Athor, Neith, and Isis, are placed in equality with Osiris, Amon, and Anubis.

‡ Athor and Isis, the one so often named the "queen of Heaven," the other the "mother of the universe."

§ If Neith be one of the forms of Isis, as the inscription on her statue at Sais presumes, she must, in antiquity and importance, have presided at the head of all the gods of Egypt, as the Brahmins placed Bhavanie, the Indian Venus, at the head of their theology. See St. John's Travels in Egypt.

magnificence, on the boundless horizon of the vast and dreary solitudes they glorify, attest to this day the religious associations of the Egyptians with their reverence for motherhood—a reverence with which the Israelites so often reproached their old taskmasters!

The capitals of the columns of the Temple of Isis, still undefaced, represent the bright countenance of a woman (four times repeated), which, irradiated with smiles, meets the eye, from whatever side it is gazed on; and in the sculpture of its still beautiful Propylon are traced religious festivals and processions, in which women, all softness in their expression, with children at their bosoms, are the images most frequently repeated.*

It may have been from the exalted rank given to Isis in the Egyptian mythology, that the women of that country attained that high consideration, which opened the book of knowledge to their perusal, which gave them the privileges of citizens, which brought the graces of their minds and persons into the most intellectual circles of Memphis and Alexandria, and which, leaving Salic laws "undreamed of in the philosophy" of the most philosophical, shared the rites and duties and occupations of husbands and fathers with their wives and mothers. If tradition and history are to be credited, this *prestige* in favour of female intellect gave to the female sovereigns of Egypt a power which the male successors of the Pharaohs or the Ptolemies never enjoyed.

But, though the sovereign power thus ascribed to the queens of Egypt (by Herodotus), over their people and their husbands, should be but a traditional exaggeration, and, though the gallantry of Egyptian lawgivers should never have gone to the extent of "obliging the husband to pledge himself that he would be obedient to his wife,"† still, the very exaggeration, (if it be one,) establishes the fact of the high intellectual qualities called forth in the Egyptian women, by the wisdom of institutions, which

* This beautiful Propylon of the Temple of Tentyra is the Porch to which Ezekiel probably alluded, when he reproached the "dark idolatries of alienated Judah."

† Diodorus Siculus, 1, 127.

denied not to one half of the species the rights that God and nature had intended equally for both.*

But Egypt (an ancient state when Israel was but a nomade population) finally submitted to the common lot of all things earthly, of empires as of man, and sunk under the touch of political and moral degradation. The Roman eagle fluttered over "its cloud-capt towers and gorgeous palaces"—over those time-honoured monuments, which still exist, enshrining history in tangible forms, and bearing evidence to facts, which prejudice can no longer refute, or scepticism deny. One only Egyptian was then found, whose character and actions recalled something of the recorded grandeur of Sesostris, and the national pride of the Pharaohs. This one was—a woman, of Greek descent, indeed, but of Egyptian parentage, birth, and associations.

Egypt had already shared the fate of her ancient contemporary empires; the throne of the Pharaohs had received a new power. The corruption of morals and manners introduced by its Greek masters, and by the scourging tyranny of the Ptolemies, had changed much of the national character, and dried up those sources of sensibility, which originated the ancient religion of poetry and affection, and so long contributed to the intellectual temperament of the people. In this revolution, the highly organized race of women, the descendants of the venerated mothers of the kings of Memphis, shared the common fate. There were still, however, in the land of the Arsinoes† and Berenices, some great, if not many good women, who long continued influential over the public interests of Egypt, through their energies, their ambition, their pride, and their patriotism.

The successive Cleopatras, though sometimes branded

* In evidence of the social position of woman in Egypt, it is scarcely necessary to point out one of the most remarkable and splendid works of the present day:—"The Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians, by Sir J. G. Wilkinson."

† The first Arsinoe was the wife of Ptolemy Trypho, or the effeminate, who owed the little glory he won, and the power he possessed, to her. She headed his armies, governed the people, and, by her courage and her manœuvres, checked the progress of Antiochus, and for a time saved Egypt.

by crimes, (but too coincident with the times, the men, and the circumstances, of a rapidly disorganizing community), exhibited powerful capacities, strong abilities, and a firmness of purpose wanting to their sons and husbands, which, though often directed to evil, still for a time preserved the national unity and the independence of their country.

The first and worst of these Cleopatras, was the bold, bad, ambitious rival of the beautiful Rodogune, (the subject of a drama* as immortal as her wrongs):—the last and greatest of the Cleopatras was she who closed the heroic history of her country with her own. The glory of Egypt, and the intellectual powers of her women, sunk together in the tomb of the daughter and successor of Ptolemy Auletes. Accused, by the eulogists and parasites of her enemies, of crimes most prevalent in the age and in the caste to which she belonged, the halo of her patriotism still threw a redeeming light over the shadow of her faults, brightening, if it did not efface them. Cleopatra loved Egypt better than the Cæsars loved Rome, and struggled to the last for the independence of *her* country, as they had done against the liberty of theirs. Opposed to the most able and powerful men that ever lived, she finally conquered the world's conquerors, by the brilliant qualities of her mind, and the seductive influence of her charms. She successively subdued Julius, enslaved Antony, and outwitted Augustus. When proclaimed the partner of the Imperator of Rome, and when her statue was placed in the temple of its gods, she only used her power over the hearts of "the world's great masters," to save Egypt and to increase its dominions.† From a fugitive princess, wronged, friendless, dethroned, and hunted to the death by unnatural kindred, she made herself an independent sovereign queen, and raised the decaying capital of her kingdom to be the intellectual metropolis of the universe; a shrine to which the wise men of all nations brought their tributes.

Never was Egypt so rich in wealth, power, and civili-

* By Corneille.
† By the addition of Cyprus, Cilicia, Judea, and Syria.

sation, as under the reign of this last of its queens, who made knowledge the basis of national supremacy,* who reconstructed that precious library, which man in his madness had destroyed; and who, when the treasures of the Roman empire were made disposable at her will, (by the prodigality of the enamoured Antony) replied to his offers:—"the treasures I want are two hundred thousand volumes from Pergamus, for my library of Alexandria."

Cleopatra encouraged science, loved the arts, cultivated letters, and was irresistibly eloquent in seven different languages, all of which she spoke with the purity of her mother tongue; and, although Lacan, the most pompous poet of the declining literature of Rome, reviles the conqueress of the Cæsars, and reproaches her for the undue influence of charms which placed his imperial patrons at her feet, still the "*feralis Erinnys*," "the fury of Rome," was the protectress of Egypt, which continued to hold on high its lotus-crowned crest, so long as Cleopatra lived. Her kingdom sunk not to the degradation of a Roman province, until the voluntary and heroic death of its champion queen disappointed the ostentatious hopes of Augustus, and deprived the land of the wisest, of the most patriotic of her sovereigns, and the last of her great intellectual illustrations.

Throughout the whole fragmentary history of the earliest peopled regions of the earth, this one great dogma is mystically attested, and made darkly visible, that at some period of the doubtful past the spiritual nature of woman struggled against the physical superiority of man! (an un-

* A wreck of the learning and accomplishment of the Egyptian women may still be traced, in the degraded caste of "the Almé," (literally the learned.) "These Almés" (observes Meiners) "receive no female into their number but what has an agreeable voice, possesses some knowledge of rhetoric, and the rules of poetry, and a talent for extempore versification. These Almés know by heart the most beautiful elegies on the misfortunes of lovers, or the death of heroes, and by singing these compositions they melt even the obdurate Turks into tears."—Meiners, vol. 1, p. 155. Two Arabic songs composed by the Almé, and given by a recent Egyptian traveller, Mr. St. John, are full of poetry and feeling:—"My heart is in the desert," is particularly beautiful.—"Osman Effendi," (says Mr. St. John) "who translated for me these scraps of poetry, compared the above song to an old Scotch ballad that he heard when he was in England:—'My heart is in the Highlands.'"

equal contest, and always most unequal, where brute force was most powerful, and ignorance most dense;)—that her penalties were grievous, and that her claims, or her disobedience, were fatal to her happiness, and ruinous to her liberty!

Such is the moral of the profane story of Oriental antiquity. But there is a history antecedent to all other written records of human actions extant, an authentic transcript of the human mind in the earliest stages of society, which authoritatively establishes the accredited dogma of the East, by a most important illustration. This record, in giving the history of a single family, (a history in its influence upon the opinions and interests of the species, the most marked and miraculous ever known,) redeems the fault of the first created woman so awfully punished, by assigning to her sex that great spiritual mission, which made woman a sublime agent in the redemption of mankind. To this fact, scriptural story bears evidence from the first to the last of its inspired pages—and to these pages a reference, reverential but truth-seeking, may, it is hoped, be addressed, without incurring the imputation of presumption.

CHAPTER IV.

Women of the Hebrews—under the Patriarchs.

The Mosaic history of the creation assigns to the East the first scene of human existence, and places the first pair, created in perfect equality, in a Paradise, which

> "of God the garden was,
> By him in the East of Eden planted."

"For God created man in his own image, male and female created he them," "to be a mate and a help to each other." To the male, to Adam,* it appears, was assigned a first

* Adam, in the Hebrew—Red Earth,—Eve—Life. But the Reverend Dr. Conyers Middleton, in his allegorical explanations of the first chap-

task of corporeal performance; for "he was put into the garden to dress and keep it." To the female, Eve, was permitted the first exercise of mind, in the call made on her intellect, by one who (whether considered as a "fallen spirit, second only to the first," or as a "creature more subtle than any beast of the field, which the Lord had made,")* sought to influence human action by intellectual means, though for evil purposes. The selection of the female for the experiment of a superhuman sophistry, indicated on her part a difficulty, rather than a facility to be won over; and the reward offered, for risking the awful penalty of death "by disobedience," was no less than that "she should be as are the Gods, knowing good from evil!" The woman, ("seeing that the tree was to be desired, to make one wise,) took the fruit accordingly thereof and did eat."

The man only followed the example of the woman; and "the woman thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat," was the weak and reproachful answer of Adam to the interrogation of his Creator.† The crime was common, but the motive was peculiar to the woman.

The penalty, too, of disobedience to both was death; but a sublime and prophetic distinction was made in favour of the future "mother of all living," of whom was to proceed *one* who should "swallow up death in victory," &c.‡

The temporal punishments inflicted on Eve were marked

ters of Genesis, represents Adam to be the Mind, Eve the Senses, and the Serpent Pleasure or Passion.—See Dr. Middleton's Letters to Dr. Waterland, vol. 2, p. 149.

* The word "subtle," in Hebrew, is said to denote metaphorically quickness of mind, discriminative sagacity. (See Bochart de serpente tentatore, p. 841.)—Archbishop Tillotson "supposes that Satan, on this occasion, assumed the form of a bright, glorious, and winged serpent, of that kind which in Scripture is called Seraph." See also Bishop Horsley's Biblical Criticisms, vol. 1.

† In the early part of the fifteenth century, the question was started among controversialists, "qui, d'Adam ou d'Eve, avait peché le plus griévement, en mangeant du fruit defendu." A learned Venetian, Luigi Foscali, made a vehement defence for Adam; and the equally learned and infinitely more witty Isotta Nogarola, of Verona, (a profound theologian, says her biographer, the friend and correspondent of Cardinal Bessanion,) and most of the great churchmen of that age, undertook the defence of Eve.—See Vita d'Isotta Nogarola. She died in 1468.

‡ Isaiah.

by an intellectual pre-eminence in suffering—Adam's, by personal degradation: to Adam was assigned the task of physical labour; "in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground from whence thou wert taken; for out of it was thou taken, for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return."* A humiliating vocation—a humiliating reminiscence, both spared as denunciations to Eve. Her retribution, on the contrary, was founded on the affections and on the mind—"sorrow," that was to be "multiplied," and "pain," (corporeal indeed in the first instance,) but connected with grief and anxieties still more harassing. Her desire, also, was decreed to be "to her husband," (that devotedness, the attribute of her peculiar and finer organization); and her "submission" to his "rule" was the penalty of her sensibility, no less than the token of physical inferiority.

In this sacred history of the origin of the species,† whether viewed through the interpretations of faith, or the glosses of philosophy—as a literal fact, or a prophetic parable—as a tradition beyond all cotemporary record, or as an image of the astronomical aspect of the heavens‡—there is a strict accordance with the great dogma of the East, that woman was a creature of high intellectual aspirations: and every subsequent epoch in sacred history produces evidences of her spiritual agency and mental energies, in carrying on the great moral economy of the Creation.

In the course of 2000 years, which, according to the

* Genesis.

† The polemic disputants of all times have filled volumes in discussing the important question, "whether the Mosaic relation of the fall of man be a figurative representation, or an authentic and literal history." —See Dissertation on the Fall, by the Reverend J. Holden. Doctor Geddes considers this passage of the Bible as a mere poetical mythos, historically adapted to the intellect of a rude, unphilosophical people.—See Dr. Geddes's Critical Remarks, &c. p. 33.

The history of the creation and of the fall of man is also considered as a philosophical mythos concerning the origin of the human race, and the causes of moral and physical evil by a host of foreign writers; among others by Bauer, Kant, Schelling, and Lessing.

‡ Hinc vides in primis Ecclesiæ Christianæ sæculis quibus vixit Celsus, et apud Judæos etiam ante Christum natum, æquiores interpretes à literâ narrationis Mosaicæ recessisse.—The Rev. Doctor Burnett's Archæologia Philosophica.

Mosaic history, filled up the interval to the Flood, it is said of man "that his heart was only evil continually," and that it even "repented the Lord that he had made him." In this corruption the women must have shared with their masters, as subordinate to their discipline; and it is recorded of them, seemingly as a reproach, that "the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair, and they took them wives of all they chose."

From the awful epoch of the Deluge, the sacred historian concentrates the history of mankind, in that of a single race or family; and Abraham, blessed by the divine promise made him from the mouth of the Creator himself, became the founder "of a great nation," whose religion and whose laws, though instituted (according to Moses) for a particular people, have spread their influence over the known world, to the present day.

Thus far holy writ, the unclosed book of reference of countless generations; but profane history, likewise, attests that, while the religious harmony, or the indifference, of the antique world, indeed, the most hostile nations to embrace or respect each other's particular mode of worship, marking their toleration at the expense of their zeal, there existed a people, who, though standing apart from the rest of mankind, asserted themselves to be the elect of heaven,—the heirs of a covenant made to their fathers by the Most High himself,—the exclusive professors of one true and pure dogma, the unity of the Deity. These were the Hebrews, Israelites, or Jews.

Philosophically considered, this people present a splendid instance of the unchangeable physiology of isolated races. Historically viewed, they are, in fact, among the most ancient, as they are the earliest recorded of all the Asiatic tribes; having been traced by human learning into the night of time, as a *débris* of that one original and sublime sect, the worshippers of the Sun. By their own inspired historians, the Hebrews are recorded as descended from Abraham,* who, under the influence of a Divine com-

* "The Patriarch Abraham, on issuing from the cave in which he had been confined by his father, is said to have adored the planet Venus."—Burnett's Archæology, p. 140.

mand, left "his country," "Ur, of the Chaldees,"* and "his kindred," and "his father's house," and went forth, in faith, to found that "great nation" which was to "make his name great for ever," "for in him was to be blessed all the families of the earth."†

From this first emigration out of "the land of their nativity," the Father of the Faithful, his family, and his descendants, were destined to a precarious existence, which forms the interest and excitement of their history. Professing a pure theism, opposed to the more tangible worship of other nations, they clung to it with that good faith and bad policy which have ever prevented their amalgamation with the various populations with which they have had intercourse. These primeval conservatives, whose impressionable temperaments (humanly speaking) so greatly aided the accomplishment of their own miraculous story, from the first striking of their tents in Chaldea, to their settlement in Palestine, (whether as wanderers in perilous deserts, sojourners in hostile regions, captives in powerful states, or, as a small, though warlike community, dropped in the midst of mighty empires,) were indebted for their preservation, and for their independence, to the exclusive knowledge and spiritual influence of the priesthood.

This priesthood, a caste apart,‡ asserted for themselves an immediate communion with the Most High, and applied to the great purposes of their holy calling all the higher excitements of which the nature of man is susceptible: they left no hidden source of intellectual power untouched, they commanded all the springs by which society is moved or fettered, and they usurped all endowments which raise man above his fellows. Priests, prophets, poets, legislators, warriors, and historians, presiding over the past, the present, and the future, they still accepted into their sublime mission the aid and agency of woman!

Through every marking era of Jewish story, in times of the deepest exigency, or direst danger, whether under

* The region of Fire. † Genesis.

‡ "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth. For he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts."—Malachi, chapter ii.

the pressure of physical want, in popular struggles, or national despondency, the spiritual agency, the moral dexterity, the pertinacious zeal, the quick perception, and poetical fervour of the Hebrew women were employed for the government or salvation of their people. Named by God "the builders of the house of Israel," marked by divine authority as "the mothers of nations," as priestesses, prophetesses, rulers, champions, stateswomen, or potentates, they were always associated with that great theocracy, which, whatever was the form of the Hebrew government, republican, aristocratic, or monarchical, was ever its spirit and its essence; till the dispersion of the wondrous people released them from all control, save that of opinion, and the laws of the nations among which they sought an asylum.

The domestic state of the Hebrew women under the Patriarchs (like that of the Arabs and other nomade tribes of all times) was one of perfect servitude. The superiority on the part of the men was supreme, and was only occasionally and temporarily repealed, under such exigencies as rendered the intellectual agency of the woman an expediency and a resource. Polygamy, though not a patriarchal institute, soon became a customary indulgence, depending on the means of supporting it; and it embittered, as it eventually degraded, the social condition of the sex, while it called forth the subtlety and multiplied the devices of the female mind.

In the narrative of Abraham's first emigration "southward from Horan in the desert," and his journey through Canaan, it is said that "he took Sarah, his wife, with him;" and when famine obliged him to leave his mountain hold "in Bethel," where, in directing his steps to more fertile regions, he had "pitched his tent, and raised his altar to the Lord," he looked to Sarah, under Providence, as his sole resource. The graphic traits of the submissive position of woman, and of the consideration in which her personal and intellectual powers were held by her master, come abundantly forth through the whole of this beautiful narration.

Abraham, at the head of his famished tribe, "for the famine was grievous in the land," went down into Egypt

(whose sovereigns had long established a regular government). Pharaoh, the reigning king, was at the head of a settled nation, which claimed an antiquity of many thousand years beyond the Mosaic date, but which had frequently suffered from the irruptions of the Shepherds. These were Nomadic tribes from the East, which had thrown down the temples of the Egyptians, and carried their women and children into captivity; so that the advance into their territories, even of so small a tribe as that of which Abraham was the pastoral chief, rendered the enterprise of the Father of the Faithful one of considerable doubt and danger.*

It may then have been on his first approach to the valley of the Nile, or within his first view of the towers of Memphis (raised, according to Egyptian record, by Menes the first mortal king who reigned in their country), that Abraham, struck with the peril that awaited him, "turned unto Sarah his wife," and invoked her aid by all that could flatter the woman, or influence the wife, "that it might be well with him for her sake, and that his soul should live because of her."

The events which followed his entrance into Egypt justified the confidence Abraham had placed in the influence of Sarah's beauty and discretion. He was received and cherished "for her sake" by the Egyptians, who "beheld the woman that she was very fair." The report of her beauty spread, till "the princes of Pharaoh's house saw her, and commended her to the king." She was even taken into the royal dwelling, and her supposed brother was endowed with great pastoral property, "for her sake;" for he had given him "sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and men servants, and maid servants, and she asses, and camels," and finally he became "very rich in gold and in silver." The infatuation of the enamoured Pharaoh went even to the making Sarah his wife, an honour which attests her virtue, no less than the power of her personal attractions. The discovery of the relation in which she stood to Abraham caused their expulsion from Egypt; but Pharaoh sent them away so richly en-

* The ravages committed in Egypt by the pastoral tribes rendered every shepherd an abomination unto the Egyptians."—Genesis, xlvi.

dowed in worldly wealth, that Abraham and his nephew Lot, on their return to Bethel, were obliged to separate their families and their people: the "land was no longer able to bear them," "for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together."*

The first influx of wealth, therefore, which founded the temporal greatness of the house of Israel, and which so soon after enabled Abraham to join in "the battles of kings," to make compacts with powerful princes, and to be considered himself as "a mighty prince,"† originated, under the special permission of divine providence, in the influence produced by the personal merits and mental qualities of a woman. Although the beauty and discretion of Sarah were thus used only as instruments, yet was her instrumentality itself a distinction in favour of her sex.

Again, in Abraham's "journey towards the south countries," Sarah came to his assistance, when "Abimelech, king of Gerar, saw, loved, and took" her. "In the integrity of my heart and the innocency of my hands have I done this," said the king, on delivering back Sarah, pure and undefiled, to him whom he had believed to be her brother: and Abraham's narrative of himself, and his motives of conduct to his wife on this occasion, in his answer to the reproaches of Abimelech, prove the importance he attached to his wife's concessions to his wish. "It came to pass," he says, "when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her (Sarah), this is thy kindness which thou shalt show to me; at every place whither we shall come, say of me, he is my brother." The effect of Sarah's influence on the king of Gerar, as on the king of Egypt, was an accession of wealth to her husband and her tribe; and it eventually produced that covenant between the "wanderer from his father's house" and the powerful king of Gerar so influential on the future fortunes and temporal consequence of her immediate posterity.‡

* Genesis, chap. 13. Ibid. chap. 21. † Genesis, chap. iv.

‡ "14. And Abimelech took sheep, and oxen, and men servants, and women servants, and gave them unto Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife." "15. And Abimelech said: Behold, my land is before thee:

Sarah, however, whose "desire was to her husband," whose devotion was always resorted to in all perilous exigencies, still returned, from the palaces of kings to her own domestic tent, the submissive wife and arduous servant. Not till she beheld her handmaid, the Egyptian bondwoman Hagar, preferred to that beauty which had placed more than one sovereign at her feet, not till she saw her own son, "even Isaac," mocked by the son of the concubine, by Ishmael, who was about to usurp his inheritance through the partiality of Abraham, did her long-stifled sense of wrongs find vent (for the wrongs of Sarah, however necessitated or predestined by an inscrutable providence, were still wrongs in the natural justice of things) in that beautiful and bitter outburst of indignant feeling, with which she reproaches Abraham, and protects the rights of her child. "My wrong be upon thee!" "The Lord judge between thee and me!" were proofs that she felt injuries, for which her physical inferiority left her no redress. The Lord, however, did judge between them, and pronounced in favour of Sarah! "For God said unto Abraham: In all that Sarah hath said to thee hearken unto her, for in Isaac shall thy seed be called."

The high approbation of the wisdom and forethought of Sarah, thus expressed, was accompanied by other distinctions, equally glorious. The patronymic name of the mother of Isaac was changed into one of temporal power, as became the foundress of her people's temporal prosperity: "For not *Sarai*, but *Sarah* shall her name be" (said the Lord); "I will bless her; she shall be the mother of nations, for kings shall be of her." With this divine testimony in favour of her unquestioned motherhood of races, with this glorious prophecy in favour of her line, consecrating her life and actions, Sarah, full of years and of honour, descended into the sepulchre purchased for her by Abraham at so great a price ("with the trees that were in the field, and the borders round about"), which became in after-times the site of a great city.*

dwell where it pleaseth thee." "16. And unto Sarah he said: Behold I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver; behold he is to thee a covering of the eyes unto all that are with thee, and with all other. Thus she was reproved."—Genesis, chap. xx.

* Genesis, chap. xxiii.

Abraham married a second wife, by whom he had sons; but it was not to the children of Kiturah that the Divine promise was made, nor to his first born by Hagar, nor to "the sons of the concubines which Abraham had, and whom he sent away with gifts"—all equally his sons, (and his inheritors,—for among the Hebrews there was no law of primogeniture.) It was to the fruit of Sarah's womb, to the nursling of Sarah's bosom, to Isaac, that the promise was made! To Ishmael, indeed, was promised a descent of twelve princes; "but" (said the Lord) "my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee."*

The reverential sorrow with which Abraham hovered round the remains of Sarah, and the sumptuous mausoleum in which he entombed her, are further proofs of her worth and her importance; while Isaac's grief for his mother is beautifully alluded to by the recorded fact, that it was not until he had become the husband of the fair Rebekah, that Isaac was comforted for his mother's death.† The character, conduct, and influence of this extraordinary woman upon the future destinies of her people, have occupied the piety, the learning, and the controversial spirit of successive ages, down to a recent period.

The beautiful and pastoral story of Rebekah, full of graphic details of the domestic life of the Hebrew women, teems with fresh illustrations of their individual influence, their subtle contrivances, and of the social inequality inflicted on them, which originated their deep-felt wrongs.‡

In maiden servitude, and in the bloom of her beautiful youth, Rebekah is first presented as coming forth among the daughters of the men of the city, "with her pitcher on her shoulder," meekly administering to the thirsty demand of Abraham's servant, and when she had "done giving him drink," "drawing water for his camels also." In the moral developement of her matron maturity, and under her motherly and not unfounded partialities, she

* Genesis, chap. vii. † Ibid. chap. xxiv.

‡ See the controversial writings on the character and conduct of Sarah and Abraham, from Origen, to the Augustin monk, Calmut, including Josephus, St. Ambrose, St. Chrysostom, St. Augustine, St. Victor, Calvin, &c.

subsequently becomes the heroine of a stirring drama, full of energy and importance.

Rebekah was the chosen object of a glorious prophecy, and the agent, like her august mother-in-law, of the Divine Will. In a temporal point of view, she is also to be considered as the secondary cause of power to her husband and her family. Rebekah gained favour in the eyes of the king of the Philistines, (as Sarah had done with the king of Egypt) to whose territories Isaac had deemed it expedient to resort (during a second famine). Isaac availed himself of the example of his father; but, the king, discovering that Rebekah was his wife, charged his people, saying:—"He that toucheth this man or his wife, shall surely be put to death." Isaac thus protected, "waxed great, and went forward," "for he had possessions of flocks, and possessions of herds, and great store of servants, and that which he sowed returned ten fold," and "when he removed to the valley of Gerar, he was visited by the king and the chief captain of his army," and he was sufficiently powerful to enter into a covenant of alliance with Abimelech himself.

Rebekah, too, was honoured beyond all human distinctions, by having been divinely pronounced to be the predestined mother "of two nations," whose founders "struggled in her womb." Yet, thus spiritually elevated, she was, humanly speaking, not the less wretched. Her partiality for her younger and superior son, who was predicted to be such by God himself,* originated those devices which perilled the lives of both, and extorted from the depths of her heart those pathetic exclamations:—"Why shall I be deprived also of you both," "I am weary of my life!" Still in the end, she was the cause of the fulfilment of the prophecy, and "secured to Jacob the blessing of Abraham to him and to his seed with him."

That the unhappy Rebekah, however, fell a victim to the morbid affections of maternity, and the perverted activity of her deviceful mind, may be inferred from the fact of the mysterious obscurity which hung upon her death and burial,—the more remarkable as the death and

* Genesis, chap. xxv.

burial of her old Syrian nurse Deborah, who on her bridal day had accompanied her from her father's house, is recorded with graphic detail.*

It appears, then, that both Sarah and Rebekah were deeply interested, and energetically active in forwarding the ordinances of the all-ruling will, in favour of their sons Isaac and Jacob; and they had both to combat and evade the passions and predilections of their husbands, which had hurried Abraham and Isaac into preference for Ishmael and Esau, in contradiction of the divine promises.†

The changing of Jacob's name to Israel,‡ (for as a prince had he power "with God and with men") justified the conduct of his mother, and fulfilled the prediction which preceded his birth.

The increasing wealth of the Hebrews, under the patriarchal government of Israel, which forwarded its temporal power, was, however, morally counteracted in its influence by Polygamy,§ the fatal tendency of which was soon discovered in the domestic misery distracting the family, and embittering the days of the fondest and best, as he was the most unfortunate of fathers. The jealousies of the sisters Rachel and Leah for supremacy in their husband's affections, and the contentions of the sons of Bilhah, of Zilpah, produced those dark divisions, which finally ended in the expulsion of Joseph. This event,

* "But Deborah, Rebecca's nurse, died, and she was buried beneath Allon Bachath, under an oak, the 'oak of Weeping.'" The burial of the nurse of Eneas is similarly described by Virgil.

† "For the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." "He found him in the desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness, He led him about, He instructed him! He kept him as the apple of his eye." "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreading abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange face with him."—Deuteronomy, chap. xxxii., verse 9, 10, 11, 12. In this passage, the most poetical and sublime, the special intervention of the Deity in favour of Jacob is the justification of the conduct of Rebekah! It is remarkable, that when the women of the Patriarchs had become antiquity to the Jews, they were still referred to as the foundresses of "the house of Israel."—See Ruth, chap. iv.

‡ Genesis, chap. xxviii. verse 13, 14, 15.

§ Esau had three wives and five sons, Jacob four wives and twelve sons. "If thou shalt afflict my daughters," (says Laban in his paternal wisdom, when parting with Jacob) "or if thou shalt take other wives besides my daughters, no man is with us; see, God is witness between thee and me."—Genesis, chap. xiii.

though it seated the great grandson of Sarah near the throne of the Pharaohs, eventually caused the future slavery, during four centuries, of the tribes of Israel, with all the struggles and crimes that ensued. It was polygamy, also, that relaxed the spiritual faith of the Israelites, it was the women of strange tribes, and the demoralizing offspring of such ties, that aided mainly to substitute a superstitious devotion to idols, for the pure theism and simple worship of their fathers.*

These many wives of one husband, these numerous servants of one master, these slaves to selfish and to sensual passions, these victims of uneasy sensations, became the future mothers of those ill-organized, stubborn, and dogged generations,† which, in spite of their prophets and their legislators, drew down the reprobation of the "God of Abraham and of Isaac." "How long will these people provoke me, and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs I have shown among them."‡

Throughout the remainder of their eventful history, the Israelites, indeed, appear perpetually relapsing into rebellion against the visible majesty of their Creator; refusing faith to the evidence of their own senses; ready under every temptation of discontent or of novelty, to desert, for the idols of other nations, or even for their own creations, the sanctuary of Jehovah. It was thus the violated law of nature reacted in virtue of its own wisdom, and that the injustice committed by the selfishness of the master was avenged in its results by the wrongs and the consequent perversion of his servant.

The twelve sons which Jacob had by his four wives seem respectively to have partaken of the idiosyncrasy of their different mothers. Reuben, the eldest child of the

* After the treachery of the brothers of the beautiful and unfortunate Dinah, and the murder of her betrothed, the devoted Sehem, "who was more honourable than all the house of his father," Jacob, in fear and distrust of the conduct of his sons and of its consequences, was obliged to remove from Canaan to Bethel. Amongst the crimes of his sons, the founders of the future tribes of Israel, Jacob accuses them of idolatry, and commands them to "put away the strange gods that were among them, and be clean, and change their raiments."—Genesis, chap. xxiv.

† Josephus, in detailing the enormous wealth of Jacob, speaks of his domestic happiness in the excellent qualities of his sons. These eulogies are due only to Benjamin and Joseph.

‡ Numbers, iv.

meek and submissive, but unloved Leah, and Joseph and Benjamin, the offspring of the beautiful and too well beloved Rachael, seem alone to have been worthy of the house from which they sprung.

The envious brothers, who hated Joseph for his virtue, who meditated his murder, sold him to slavery, nearly broke their father's heart by the tale of his destruction, and presented to his wretched mother's eyes the afflicting image of a fragment of his dress steeped in his blood, were such sons and such brothers as Oriental despotism produces down to the present day—where woman is still the servant, man the master; and where polygamy is the ruling institute of the land.

The child of Jacob's first deep and legitimate love, the son of the wife of his choice, the well born offspring of a well organized mother, rose superior to the terrible destiny prepared for him by fraternal jealousies and family dissensions; and the betrayed and persecuted Joseph finally attained to the highest rank and consideration, in the most civilized nation of the earth, in that nation which was to enlighten future ages.*

The most precious reward for his services, which the all-forgiving Joseph could obtain from Pharaoh, was a grant of the frontier province of Goshen to his father and brethren. The settlement of the Hebrews in Egypt, however favourable to their interests in the first instance, terminated in their slavery, not, perhaps, unprovoked by that peculiarity of their constitutional characters, which "hardened their hearts and stiffened their necks" throughout the whole of their miraculous story, and rendered them a community always difficult to serve and impossible to rule, whom

"No king could govern, whom no God could please."†

* The Rabbinical writers assert that Abraham, in return for the wealth heaped on them, for Sarah's sake, by the Egyptian king, taught the Egyptians arithmetic and astrology, "which (says Josephus), thus coming from Chaldea into Egypt, passed from the Egyptians to the Greeks."

† The slavery of the Iraelites seems to have arisen out of one of those revolutions, which brought to the throne of Egypt a foreign king. The king, "which knew not Joseph," could hardly have been of the same house with the Pharaoh who established his people in Goshen.

CHAPTER V.

The Women of the Hebrews. Under the Egyptian Captivity. At the Exodus. In the Desert of Shur. Miriam. The Daughters of Zelophehad. The inheritance of daughters among the Hebrews.

PRONE to murmur, slow to reform, turbulent, and prolific, the Israelites, increasing in numbers and in wealth, became, in the eyes of the Egyptians, a nucleus of sedition and an example of discontent. "The children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceedingly strong; and the king said they are more and mightier than we! so let us deal wisely, lest they multiply, and that it come to pass when there falleth out a war, they join our enemies and fight against us. Therefore they did set over them taskmasters, and afflicted them with their burthens; but the more they afflicted them the more they grew."

The consequences of this false policy in the Egyptian government led eventually to the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, to their forty years' wandering in the desert, and to their final conquest and settlement in the land of Canaan!

That the descendants of Jacob benefited largely by their sojourn in Egypt, that they borrowed from its superior civilisation many arts of luxury and refinement, many implements of agriculture, and of civil life, together with far juster ideas of commerce than they entertained in the days of the Patriarchs, may be inferred from the details of scripture, and from the evidences of corresponding discoveries, which science and enterprise are daily making in the earth-embosomed history of remote and unwritten antiquity.

That the condition of the Hebrew women was also improved by the long residence of their people in that land of wealth and refinement, may be deduced from their active agency at the stirring epoch of their delivery, when the flight of the enslaved colony, the simultaneous emi-

gration of a great and numerous community, were to be effected under the most difficult and adverse circumstances, that ever marked the emancipation of the oppressed from the thraldom of the oppressor.

The person elected for the leader of this great enterprise was one "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," endowed by nature for the mighty and laborious mission, by all the energies of a powerful and imperturbable temperament, and spiritually fitted through divine election by the "God of Israel" himself. Such was the great deliverer of his people "from the land of Egypt and the house of bondage;" such was the Jewish legislator, whose laws, after the lapse of some thousand years, are still influencing the opinions and codes of the most enlightened nations.

That Moses lived to manhood, and effected all this; that he was not at his birth swept away with the waters of the Nile, and confounded with its slime; that he was saved, cherished, and early imbibed that enthusiastic feeling and sympathy for his suffering countrymen, which constitute the true spirit of patriotism in all times, was due to woman! Pharaoh had committed to the execution of two Hebrew women, wise in their art, (whose names scripture has preserved) the destruction of the male population of Israel at its birth. From this atrocious order Shiphrah and her companion extricated themselves, with true female dexterity; instancing a physiological obstacle to the king's wishes, and thus "saving the men children alive, so that the people multiplied and waxed exceedingly." Thus frustrated, Pharaoh charged all people, saying, "every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive."

To evade this dreadful sentence, one unhappy mother of the tribe of Levi, after hiding her infant for three months, resolved on committing him herself to the chances of the Nile. The confidant of so perilous a breach of the atrocious law was a child, her own child, the sister of the proscribed infant, one whose poetical name—Miriam, "the star of the sea," (she who brightens or enlightens)*—may

* St. Jerome.

have been given her from some precocious exhibition of the great qualities which afterwards distinguished her, or some happy coincidence of locality or nativity, consonant to the customs of the Hebrews.

The unfortunate mother, having "laid her infant in the flags by the river's brink," appears (in fear or in despair) to have abandoned him to his fate, and to have departed. But Miriam "his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done with him;" and another image of female sympathy then presented itself! The king's daughter "saw the ark among the flags, and sent her maid to fetch it. And when, on opening it, she beheld the babe," she wept, and said, "this is one of the Hebrew children." The young Miriam, in the quick perception of developed sensibility, saw the salvation of her infant brother in the eyes of the princess; and, darting forward from her covert, adroitly asked, "Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her go, and the maid went and called the child's mother."*

It is impossible to conceive a more beautiful, a more dramatic incident; one in which female sympathy and intelligence are more happily painted. Moses, restored to the humble paternal home, received his first impressions (always the most indelible) from the lips of his Hebrew mother, and of his sister, that sister, his saviour, his protectress, and probably his earliest instructress. His intelligence and sensibility must have been thus early awakened by that tragic outrage on his own person, to a bitter sense of his nation's wrongs. It was not until "Moses grew" that he was brought back to his princess and protectress, and that "he became her son."

* In Josephus's account, this incident, simple and striking when told in scripture language, is not only falsified from beginning to end, but is given in the true style of Racine's Esther or Athalie, if the original French version, by the celebrated Arnaud D'Andilly, from the Greek is to be depended on. Here is the little Miriam's speech to the princess, the child being supposed to have refused the bosom of Egyptian nurses: "C'est en vain, madame, que vous faites venir toutes ces nourrices, quisqu'elles ne sont pas de la même nation de cet enfant. Mais si vous en prenez une d'entre les Hebreux peut-estre qu'il n'en aurait point d'aversion."—Livre ii. chap. 5.

The translation, however, of Arnaud is said, by the père Gillet, to be plus élégante que fidele.

The brother nursling of Miriam betrayed his national temperament and breeding, while still in the palace of the king; for the first recorded incident in his life was that "He slew the Egyptian who had smote an Hebrew, one of his brethren," and then "fled from the face of Pharaoh." He fled, probably, to meditate the delivery of his people! that delivery which he so miraculously effected. But in the enterprise he was not alone; for, conjointly with himself, were embarked, in the great mission, his brother Aaron, and his sister Miriam, "Miriam the Prophetess," one inspired by that Heaven,* with which she is more than once represented in mysterious communion.

It is certain (says a learned and pious expounder of the Old Testament)† that she had received a portion of the prophetic spirit; and that she was a joint leader of the people with her two brothers, is proved by the words of the prophet Micah—"for I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam;" and again, "the Lord spoke suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, come out ye three under the tabernacle of the congregation, and the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called down Miriam."

What a change must have been wrought in the moral condition of the Hebrew women, during the four or five hundred years residence of the Israelites in Egypt, when one among them was deemed capable and worthy to lead, in the greatest‡ enterprise that ever was undertaken! It appears that the women were not only made acquainted with the coming Exodus of their people, when it as yet wore the air of a mysterious conspiracy, but to them was consigned, by Moses, the delicate task of providing for the material exigencies of a long and perilous sojourn in barren deserts and trackless wildernesses, when expediency, for a time substituted for right, obliged him to order the women "to borrow of the Egyptians jewels of

* It must be remembered that Miriam was of the consecrated tribe of Levi, the hereditary priesthood.

† Doctor Clarke.

‡ Doctor Clarke supposes that Miriam was inspired by the Holy Spirit to instruct and lead the women, as Moses was the men.

silver and jewels of gold, and raiment," &c. &c. It was some palliation of this infringement of moral probity, "that the women had found favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they gave unto them such things as they required."*

When the hour of departure arrived, on that awful "night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt," these true women, "whose desire was unto their husbands," these devoted wives and mothers, without one exception, without one desertion from their great cause of national emancipation, (though not, perhaps, without one sigh for the comforts, luxuries, and refinements† of the most civilized people of the world) set forth for the far promised land. They commenced their journey by the deserted cities of Letaa and Belzephon‡ "with a mixed multitude of six hundred thousand people," "besides children," prepared to wander in pathless deserts and among hostile tribes, under every privation and suffering, which a position, so exposed and so unaccommodated, could inflict.

After the miraculous passage of the Red Sea, and the utter destruction of the Egyptian army, when the brightening day that succeeded to the dreadful night spread before the weary but joyous Israelites, the waterless deserts of Shur,—Moses raised that glorious canticle, supposed to be the earliest recorded poetry of the world, which, full of triumph for his miraculous passage and victory, predicted the downfall of great nations before his own,—the sorrows "of the people of Palestine"—the "amazement of the Dukes of Edom." But he sung

* Exodus, chap. xii. Josephus asserts that the Egyptians made the women presents, some from impatience for the departure of the Hebrews, and others from friendship, which they expressed by shedding tears at their separation.—History of the Jews, Article 95, vol. 1.

† The elegance of the women's dress, even in the desert, is proved by many passages in the Scriptures. "Aaron, when moulding his golden calf, called upon the people to deliver up the golden ear-rings which were in the ears of their wives, their sons, and their daughters." Moses, too, makes the foot of the laver of brass of the looking-glasses (metal mirrors) of the women assembling.—*Exodus*, 38.

‡ Josephus. Moses alone was not accompanied by his wife: he had previously sent her away, but Zipporah and her sons soon followed him into the desert, accompanied by her father.

not alone—coeval with this first poetic outburst of holy inspiration from the lips of man, was the poetry of woman's high, excited spirit. "Miriam the prophetess took a cymbal in her hand, and all the women went with timbrels and with dances after her:" answering the terror-striking ode of Moses with more cheery inspirations, she raised the depressed spirits of an audience of 600,000 listeners, calling on them "to sing unto the Lord, for he had triumphed gloriously! the horse and his rider had he thrown into the sea."

Miriam was thus a leader of the female emigration of Israel, sharing in her brother's prophetic mission, and animating her people by strains as inspired as his own.*

When Miriam again appears in this sublime drama, it is not in her sacerdotal character as prophetess or priestess, but as the champion of her people, the rigid guardian of the law: for she considered Moses as usurping an undue power, in violating, by his marriage with "an Ethiopian woman," that very dispensation which he had himself so religiously and rigorously appointed. She had probably brought Aaron over to her opinion; and the observation, "Hath the Lord indeed only spoken by Moses? hath he not also spoken by us?" is an evidence of their common rights. "Miriam and Aaron," it is said, "both spake against Moses;" he was, moreover, the subject of suspicion and aversion to the murmuring tribes,† who, in their discontent, rejected his miracles, and disobeyed his injunctions.

On what grounds of likelihood this was done, none can now asssert. Moses, all prophet as he was, was still but man, and as such was fallible;‡ but the conduct of Miriam (however culpable) was of fearful worldly import

* Josephus, with true Rabbinical prejudice where woman is considered, omits all further mention of Miriam, after her interview with the Egyptian princess; but in the history of the Hebrew women, the Scriptures are the only guides.

† As for *this Moses*, the man that brought us out of the land of Egypt, &c.—*Exodus*, chap. xxxiv. again chap. xviii. and xx.

‡ The weakness of Aaron, and his inferiority to his brother and sister, strikingly marked throughout his mission, and the people calling on him in the absence of Moses, "Up, and make us Gods that shall go before us," and his making them a golden calf, are proofs.

in the eyes of her powerful brother; and that it far exceeded, in moral courage and consistency, the bearing of the weaker one, is attested in the text, by Aaron's lowly concession to Moses, and penitential acknowledgment of his seditious errors; "wherein" (he says, alluding to Miriam and himself) "we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned."

Aaron thus purchased his forgiveness, and obtained it. Not so Miriam, who must have acted on a strong conviction, (though, as it should seem, an erroneous one) and she offered no recantation. She was accordingly alone condemned to suffer that dreadful punishment, which struck her down physically and morally to the earth. Shut out from the camp of her people, abandoned to the solitary liberty of the desert, under the most horrible bodily suffering, she may there have recalled the scene on the shores of the Nile, the ark of rushes, and the tender stratagem by which she had saved the life of her now awful brother; and, in the bitterness of her spirit, may have reproached him with having rendered hers an infliction, and a curse!

It is said "that the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again;" but from that time forth, except when her example is held out as a warning, and a threat,* the priestess, prophetess, and patriot, is heard of no more, until the record of her death! She died in Kadish in the wilderness of Zin, and yielded up her brave spirit, within view of that blessed land, to which she had so mainly contributed to lead her people. Her tomb, a national monument, stood near the city of Petrea, and was considered a consecrated spot, even so recently as when Eusebius lived and wrote.† Moses, her brother nursling, and her master, followed soon after; "But no man knoweth of his sepulchre to this day."‡

Ere Moses however finished his sacred mission, he originated many laws relating to women, which testified their increasing importance, from the time of their departure

* "Remember what the Lord did unto Miriam, by the way, after that she came forth out of Egypt;" notwithstanding the dreadful punishment of Miriam, the rebellion of Korah speedily followed.

† In the fourth century. ‡ Deut. chap. xxiv.

from Egypt. Forty years' wandering in the desert, sharing with the men their dangers and their hardships, and submitting to more than their privations,* might have awakened a sense of intellectual equality, which Asiatic institutes did not tolerate, nor the jealousy of polygamy admit: and though the women were frequently complimented with the name of "wives," it was still deemed expedient by their lords and legislators to restrict their intellectual aspirations and civil liberties.†

They were, therefore, prohibited by the severest penalties from holding intercourse with the women of other nations. "In the trial of jealousy, the suspected woman could only be cleared by a miraculous interposition in her favour;" "and a witch was not permitted to live," (for in all times there were "witches" among the Hebrew women). One of the laws promulgated by Moses in the plains of Moab, by Jordan near Jericho, was "concerning heiresses." The great legislator anticipated, in his wisdom, the consequences of wealth falling into the hands of women, and being thus placed at the disposal of her affections,—beyond the control of her male relatives. This was a dangerous power, which, by enabling her to marry among strangers, would decrease the temporal means of her own people. He decreed, therefore, that heiresses should "marry in their own tribe," so that no part of an ancient inheritance might be alienated from the original family. The women of the poor, indeed, might marry where they listed; but to no class did there appear to be

* The progress which the women had made in the arts, both of refinement and of utility, was proved by their contributions to the tabernacle. "All the women that were wise-hearted did spin by their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen."—*Exodus*, xxxv. An allusion is also made to a texture resembling the Cachmere shawl of the present day. "And all the women whose hearts stirred them up to wisdom spun goat's hair." It appears, also, that the sexes sometimes changed character; and that the women adopted the male attire to go to battle, is proved by a prohibition of Moses.—*Deuteronomy*, chap. xxii. Josephus's version of this passage is, "take care above all things that in war the women may not habit themselves as men, and that no man shall habit himself as a woman."—Book iv. chap. viii.

† That the women of the Hebrews had begun to consider their claims to civil rights and to contend for them, is clearly proved by the appeal of the daughters of Zelophehad, to the justice of Moses, after the death of their father.

any exclusion of daughters from sharing in the heritage of their father's house, either through the bestowal of gifts in their father's lifetime, or by sharing in the inheritance at his death. "The *inconvenience* of the inheritance of daughters" (for such the men of the Hebrews considered it) was thus remedied; but their right to it could not be set aside, since God himself had pronounced in their favour.*

"This is the thing which the Lord doth command concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying let them marry to whom they think best; only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry."

"And every daughter that possesseth an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel shall be wife unto one of the family of the tribe of her father; then the children of Israel may enjoy every man the inheritance of his fathers."

"Even as the Lord commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad."

These laws arose out of the claims which the orphan daughters of Zelophehad made, not only to the inheritance of their father, but to his name. Nothing is more striking in the noble story of the Hebrew women, than the description of these parentless girls ("five in number") presenting themselves before the great tribunal of their nation, and thus stating their claims "as they stood before Moses, and before Eleazer the priest, and before the princes and all the congregation by the door of the tabernacle, saying, 'Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the Lord in the company of Korah, but died in his own sin, and had no sons.'"

"Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he hath no son? give us, therefore, a possession among the brethren of our father."

"And Moses brought their cause before the Lord, and the Lord spake unto Moses, saying:—'The daughters of Zelophehad speak right. Thou shalt surely give them possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren, and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them.'"†

* Numbers, xxxvi. verse 6, 7, 8. † Numbers, chap. xxvii.

CHAPTER VI.

Women of the Hebrews under the Judges. Deborah.

WHEN Moses celebrated the last great act of his miraculous mission on Mount Tabor, within view of the city of Jericho, he appointed Joshua, the most experienced of the great captains of the host, and Eleazer, the high priest, as rulers over a people he himself had found it so difficult to govern.* From that memorable epoch, to the peace of forty years, which followed the taking of Canaan from Jabin, the annals of Israel were steeped in blood; and the conquest of Jericho, which opened the land of promise to the descendants of Abraham, was effected under such cruel circumstances, as proved that the predatory habits, and "forty battles" of the Hebrews, had done little for the interests of humanity, or civilisation.

When Jericho fell, no sex, no age, no rank, was spared by the exterminating sword of the merciless besiegers: all were put to death, save one woman and her family—an humble woman,† of the lowest class, and not of the best repute, who having received two wayfaring strangers under the protection of her roof, refused to give them up to the tardy suspicions of the government,‡ thus saving the lives of her guests at the risk of her own.

These stranger guests of the generous Rahab were the Jewish spies, who returned safely to their camp, with that valuable information, which, as far as human science went, gave the victory to Joshua. That the Hebrew captains

* "Would to God that we had died in the land of Egypt, or that we had died in this wilderness," was the constant burthen of the Jewish murmurs.—*Numbers.*

† Josephus describes Rahab as the mistress of an inn.—Book v.

‡ According to Josephus, the Jewish spies were considered by the people of Jericho as strangers, whom curiosity alone had brought to visit the city; and they were thus permitted to examine its weak and strong places, its walls and gates, and to discover which of the latter would be the easiest surprised.—Book v. chap. i.

believed themselves deeply indebted to Rahab, was proved by their remembering, even in the heat of the ferocious attack, the promise made to her by their secret agents, "to save her and those she loved in the hour of peril:" she having exacted from them in return for her services that they should save alive her father and her mother, and her brothers and her sisters,—a true woman's covenant, whose affections went before all interests; for what might not Rahab have demanded!

From the taking of Jericho till the subjection of the Israelites under the yoke of the Assyrians, and again (after a temporary success) by the Moabites, the Jewish chroniclers, sacred and profane, record a state of society dreadful to contemplate: "The sword without, and terror within,"* crimes the most atrocious, perpetrated under circumstances, the most disgusting, and a reckless cruelty in perpetual activity, "which destroyed both the young man and the virgin, the suckling and the old man of gray hairs." All that Moses had prophesied to the Israelites, as the inevitable result of their wayward obstinacy, and their indomitable pride, came to pass;† and that dreadful prediction was fulfilled to the letter and in the spirit.

Moral dissolution and political degradation succeeded, in their fullest extent, to their proud conquests over Canaan. Luxury and wealth introduced corruption and disunion among the tribes, broke down the national spirit, and fomented civil war. "Their corruption was beyond that of their fathers, for they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn ways."‡

Disobedience to their laws, desertion of their altars, brutality to woman, and treachery to man, filled up the measure of "the wickedness" of the new generation after Joshua, so "that the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of the spoilers and spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies."

* Deuteronomy, xxxii.

† "For I know their imagination which they go about, even now before I have brought them into the land which I sware."—*Deut.*

‡ Judges.

The most ancient race of the earth seemed about to pass away, or to lose its identity in subjection to another people. The Israelites had been twenty years in subjection to Jabin king of the Canaanites, who held his court in the city of Azor, with an armed force of 300,000 infantry, 10,000 cavalry, and 3,000 chariots. His general, Sisera, had vanquished them in several pitched battles, and reduced them to become tributaries, or enslaved subjects. "No humiliation was saved them," says the most favourable of their historians, "and this was permitted by God to punish them for their pride and their ingratitude."*

In this depressed state, the descendants of Abraham and Sarah, however, kept up some forms of their old republican and spiritual government—a nucleus of their future power, —a sign to rally their prostrate spirits, in moments of hope and faith! They had still a judge in Israel, (the successor of Moses, and of Joshua, and, like them, believed to be inspired by the Divine Spirit) one in whom the virtue, and the wisdom, and the courage of their ancient prophets, statesmen, and warriors, were still extant. This judge or ruler, "whose seat of judgment was not in the gorgeous tabernacle," where the great tribunal of the people was held in the time of Moses and Eleazer, "but under a palm-tree," "this judge to whom the children of Israel still came up for judgment," was a woman!—"Deborah, the prophetess, of Lapidoth." "For she judged Israel at that time, when Jabin mightily oppressed them."†

Her name, Deborah, is said to signify the bee—the natural image, not less of sagacity and public utility, than of female pertinacity and forethought. Deborah seems to have been supreme, both in civil and religious affairs;‡ and if Lapidoth were her husband, and not her birthplace, as some suppose,§ he is not mentioned as being any thing

* Josephus, book v. chap. vi.

† "This," (says Doctor Clarke) "is the first instance of a Gynæocracy on record." The Salic law was no item in the Mosaic code.

‡ Doctor Clarke.

§ Lapidoth—"the termination," says a learned commentator, "is not common in the name of a man, and some make it the name of a place." Others take it appellatively—Lapidoth, signifying a lamp: and the Rabbins relate that Deborah was first discovered feeding the lamps on the altar of the tabernacle: they also suppose that the epithet alluded to her intellectual illumination.

either in the government, or in the victorious army raised by his inspired wife.

A Rabbinical commentator writes that "those among the Israelites, who, before her time, had secretly lamented the impurities of the people, and knew not where to apply for the means of reformation," now came up to "the palm tree of Deborah," and, in their confidence in her spiritual mission upon earth, sought her mediation with God, that they might be delivered out of the hands of their enemies!

But the scripture, a far better authority, says explicitly "that Deborah judged Israel;" and that when the children of Israel, in the moment of their direst exigency, and deepest despondency, "came up to her for judgment" or counsel, she acted at once vigorously and promptly upon their appeal—made an effort to rouse the dormant spirit of the now degraded conquerors of kings and kingdoms—sent for the chief captain of their inglorious host, Barak, and giving him his commission from on high, under the broad seal of Heaven, which, as Heaven's minister, she was warranted to affix, she spoke these bold words, in which the spirit of the prophetess consecrated the strong volition of the valorous woman:—"Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded, saying, 'Go and draw to Mount Tabor, with those 10,000 men, &c.; and I will draw unto thee, to the river Kishon, Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army. For, with his armies and his multitudes, I will deliver them into thy hands.'"

But Barak doubted—hesitated; he had no confidence in so daring an enterprise, without the influential presence of her who had prophesied it. "If," said the timid general, "If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, then will I not go."

The spirited, reproachful, and contemptuous answer of Deborah is full of life and truth—"I will surely go with thee, notwithstanding the journey thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hands of a woman."—"And Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh."

The movements and numerical force of Barak were betrayed to the enemy by the treachery of Heber. Sisera, too, marched with a disproportioned force upon Kishon,

which may have made the heart of the Israelite captain quail; since Deborah had again to pour her spirit in his ear. "Deborah said unto Barak, 'Up! for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thy hands; is not the Lord going before thee?' So Barak went down from Mount Tabor, and 10,000 men after him."

Under the spirit-stirring influence of the inspired Deborah, Barak recovered his courage, fought, and conquered; and, of the powerful enemy, of the hitherto victorious leader of the Canaanites, "there was not a man left." "From that hour, the children of Israel prospered, and prevailed over Jabin, the king of Canaan, whom they destroyed."*

When the battle was fought and won, which saved Israel, then Deborah,—the wise judge—the brave warrior, came forth in the face of her people, in her higher quality of prophetess and priestess, and raised that glorious, canticle, that *Te Deum*, which for poetry, sublimity, and historical interest, has never been surpassed.† Her invocation to her own high spirit, "Awake! awake! Deborah!"—"Awake, awake, with a song!" is abrupt and sublime. Her fearful description of the state of Israel, when she "awoke" it to its salvation,—when "the highways were unoccupied, and travellers walked through byways,—when the inhabitants of the villages ceased in Israel,—and when they chose new gods,"—"when there was war at the gates" and when, there "was neither a shield or spear seen among 40,000 in Israel,"—is eminently graphic.—"Speak, ye that ride on white asses"‡

* Judges, chap. iv.

† This canticle of Deborah was sung 2285 years before the birth of Christ. A fine immortality! a grand celebrity! There are among the learned some who believe that Homer took it as his model, and found in it the germ of his own immortal poem. In an article in the British Quarterly Review, in which the intellectual nature of Woman is treated with contempt, their supporters (few in number) are called on to produce any thing that can compare to the poetry produced by men. The first ode on record was the joint effusion of a brother and sister, Moses and Miriam; and Deborah's canticle, which succeeded it, besides its higher poetic inspiration, has the distinction of preceding Homer's epic by thirteen centuries.

‡ Persons of quality, it seems, were distinguished by the colour of the asses they rode on; the white, being more rare, were more valued.—*Exposition of the Historical Books of the Old Testament, by M. H. of the Gospel.*

(the aristocracy of the land)—"Ye that sit in judgment" —"Ye, the nobles among the people,"—are interrogations not less strikingly grand. Her allusion to the former glories of Israel, when "the mountains melted from before the Lord God of Israel," contrasting to the abject state in which she found it, is artfully and poetically conceived. Lonely, and silent, and desolate, the cities and villages lay prostrate. The clank of foreign arms, "the noise of archers," were alone heard in the once most frequented places and all was in prostration, "until *I*, Deborah, arose! I arose, a mother in Israel!"* "and my heart was towards the governors of Israel that offered themselves willingly. The Lord made me have dominion over the mighty;" "out of Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer."

"And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah! and Barak," "who was sent on foot into the valley." To this enumeration of her faithful allies, the brave and the intellectual of her nation, follows that indignant reproach to the deserters of the holy cause of national emancipation. "For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart;" and of his tribe, she asks, tauntingly, "Why abidest thou among the sheep-fold to hear the bleatings of the flocks?" Gilead, too, is reproached as remaining "beyond Jordan! and Dan, in his ships, and Asher, abode on the sea, in his breaches (creeks)." "While," she adds, "the tribes of Zebulun and Nepththali jeopardized their lives unto death, in the high places of the field." The victory of the popular army, she had raised, is thus beautifully sung: "They fought from Heaven. The stars, in their courses, fought against Sisera! the river of Kishon swept them away (that ancient river!)" "Oh, my soul, thou hast trodden down strength; so let all thine enemies perish before the Lord; but let them that love thee be as the sun when he goeth down in his strength."

To this splendid effusion, all the power and faculties of an ardent soul, in their closest intensity and application,

* This canticle is given conjointly to Deborah and Barak. But Deborah says throughout, in her own person, "*I*, Deborah." And Barak is mentioned in the second person as being according to the historical fact, "sent by her on foot into the valley."

were evidently brought to bear! Deborah was in earnest, "as she was spiritually, said to be, inspired;" and something may be allowed in extenuation of her seeming self-glorifying, on account of the extraordinary position in which she was placed;—the ruler of one nation, the conqueror of another, and the first great reformer which had risen among the Hebrews, since the mission of their mighty legislator, Moses.

Deborah reigned and maintained an unbroken peace in Israel of forty years (an indefinite term),* in which there was nothing to record; happy the nation whose blood-stained chronicles are thus interleaved with the white pages of peace and prosperous obscurity!

It has been remarked by scriptural commentators, that Deborah alone, of all the rulers of Israel, has escaped, unreproved by the prophets and inspired historians; and the murmuring Israelites, who denounced Moses as deceptive, accused Joshua as indiscreet, revealed the vices of Samson, the frailties of David, and the idolatry of Solomon, have left the pure and active life of Deborah of Lapidoth without spot or reproach.

The peace of forty years, "given to the land by Deborah," terminated, after her death, in the war with the Midianites and the Arabs, by whom, for their sins, "the Israelites were oppressed."† This event, ascribed to the ingratitude and idolatry of the restless factious tribes, brought forward the genius and founded the fortunes of the valiant Gideon, who refused the prayer of the people he had saved, to rule over them, otherwise than through the influence of his consideration and patriotism.

When his death had relieved the Israelites from all moral and spiritual restraint, "again they remembered not the Lord their God, who had delivered them out of the

* The frequent occurrence of the number forty in scriptural text is very remarkable. The Flood lasted "forty days," the Israelites were "forty years" in the Desert, Moses "forty days" in the Mount, Ezekiel prophesied that Egypt should be desolated for "forty years," and our Saviour was "forty days," in the Wilderness. The modern Arabs still employ the word "forty" to express an indefinite period. The Hebrew is said to be a sister-dialect of the Arabic, and the Jews and Arabs may have mutually borrowed from each other.

† Judges, chap. vi. Josephus, book viii.

hands of their enemies." The conspiracy of Abimelech (the natural son of Gideon), the murder of his numerous brothers, his atrocious crimes, and disgusting vices, again threw the Israelites into the anarchy (for such was the reign of the thirty tyrants). Then followed the atrocious vow of Jephthah, and its atrocious accomplishment,* (only relieved by the patriotic devotion of his heroic daughter, the one bright gleam that fell upon the darkness of outraged humanity.) At Jephthah's death, the conquest of Israel by the Philistines once more threatened the utter annihilation of a people, who were again saved by the mercy of Providence, through the agency of woman.

CHAPTER VII.

Women of the Hebrews under the Philistines. The Mother of Samson. Naomi and Ruth. Under the Theocracy. Hannah.

THE Israelites were already forty years in the bondage of the Philistines, when the angel of the Lord appeared unto the wife of Manoah (a Danite), and promised her a son, who should deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines. "Then the woman came and told her husband;" and the birth of the last of the patriot rulers of Israel verified the prophecy. The struggles of Samson for his country, and his great and eventful life (terminated by a death of self-sacrifice, the most remarkable in story), had lost its influence over those for whom he had suffered. The subsequent anarchies and crimes, the substitution of the grossest idolatry for the purest theism,

* The vow of Jephthah, and its accomplishment, was the result of his own ferocious nature and superstitious ignorance; and the murder or sacrifice of his innocent child "was neither asked of him by God, nor exacted by the law," says Josephus. Antiquity, sacred and profane, relates no parallel to this strange and terrible expiatory offering, to appease the wrath of the God of mercy: for when the faith of Abraham was put to the proof, another victim was found to save humanity its most unnatural crime,—the ram caught in the thicket, to become Abraham's burnt offering, in place of his own son. So, too, in the mythological counterpart of this event, Diana presents a stag to the knife of Agamemnon, and rescues his beautiful child!

when "every man did that which seemed right in his own eyes,"* and the law and the prophets were alike forgotten, form a dreary picture, only relieved by the beautiful episode of two private and lowly women: and thus the flickering flame of moral truth and of spiritual hope was again preserved and fed by woman, as the celestial fire, in Pagan times, was committed to the vigilance of the vestal priestess!

The story of Naomi and Ruth is full of simplicity and beauty; and in the conversion of the fair young Moabitess (the grandmother of the future king David), and the bringing her into the pedigree of the Messiah, there is offered a type of the calling of woman, in the fulness of time, to the great mission of redemption. The honour done to the women of Israel, by the elders and the people, on the marriage of Ruth with Boaz, is a further confirmation of the virtues of their female ancestors. For "all the people that were in the gates, and the elders said: We witness that the Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachael and Leah, *which two did build the house of Israel.*"†

The Israelites were again vanquished in battle by the Philistines; and their temporal government, vested in the person and family of the grand sacrificer, or high priest, Eli, became purely theocratical. But the first of their theocrats saw the holy ark pass into the profane hands of idolatrous enemies, and 30,000 of the Hebrew army, including his own sons, left on the field of battle. That there was still some patriot feeling extant in Israel to lament this disgrace, is proved, not only by Eli having been struck down by grief for the loss of the ark, but by the death of his daughter-in-law, who gave premature birth to a son, whom she named Ichabod, or "Ignominy," from her own sense of the disgraceful event which hurried her to the grave.

The loss of the ark was, perhaps, a type of the approaching downfall of the reigning hierarchy. The sons of the hereditary High Priest had become drunk with a power which was now irresponsible on earth; and the

* Judges, chap. xxi. † Ruth, chap. iv.

crimes and vices of the sacerdotal family, (outrageous to society and impious to God,) accomplished those changes in the government of Israel, for which the people had been gradually prepared. The hereditary priesthood was losing its hold on public opinion; and some new manifestations of power, consecrated by heaven, and approved by man, had long been called for. A transition was at hand; and to make way for the breaking up of old and inapplicable combinations, new forms of government had become inevitable.

But the miraculous agency by which this change was to be worked out, was again given to woman. Hannah, the childless wife of Elkanah, the Levite of Ramathaim, had long wept her sterility; for "her adversary had provoked her sore, for to make her fret," on that account—(a trait of manners still familiar in the East). Hannah was to Elkanah what Rachael had been to Jacob, the beloved wife of his bosom, beloved beyond his other and more fruitful wives, as is proved in his fond and consolatory address, on observing her dejection. "Hannah, why weepest thou? why canst thou not eat?" and "Why is thy heart grieved?—am not I worth more to thee than ten sons?"

Still, "Hannah in the bitterness of her soul, prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore." "She vowed a vow to the Lord of Hosts," and her vow was accepted, and fulfilled. Her interview with the high priest in the temple, her defence against his suspicions, her calling herself "a woman of sorrowful spirit, who had come to pour out her soul before the Lord," are all in the earnestness of a high conviction; and her beautiful prayer,* and her naming the son of that prayer, "the asked of God," because "she had asked him of the Lord," are circumstances marking the highest intensity of female sensibility, and of its tenacity of purpose.

Hannah, conscious of her calling, now stood apart from

* "Oh Lord of Hosts, if thou wilt indeed look upon the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thy handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life." The evil of polygamy is forcibly painted in these jealousies among the wives of Elkanah.

her family, and on the ceremony of the yearly sacrifice, refused to accompany them to the temple, after the birth of her son. She refused to go "till her child was weaned," when she would offer him herself to the Lord, there to abide for ever (the future theocrat of Israel, when Eli and his sons should be swept away.) But when she had presented her "asked of God" in the temple, "with offerings of value," and with all the high ceremonies and forms prescribed by the Hebrew laws, and when she had "left him to serve in the temple;" then she came forth, under a new and holy inspiration, a prophetess, like Miriam, a reformer, like Deborah.* She attacked the vices of the existing priesthood,† and prophesied their downfall; she attacked the feebleness of the nobles,‡ and foretold their prostration; and she imaged out the growing anarchy of the tribes, and the consequent necessity of a temporal chief, to compress it. She gave hope to the poor,§ counsel to the rich; and she was the first who declared that divine dogma, which the wisdom and experience of mankind have never since surpassed, that "the *Lord is a God of knowledge*, and by him *actions* are weighed"‖—the religion of truth, the philosophy of fact!

The women of the Hebrews seem always to have been in the van of political civilisation; and Hannah, throughout her sublime canticle, predicted the revolution working in the opinion of the people, their growing dislike to the hereditary priesthood (the sons of Eli, the high priest,) whom they regarded as the "sons of Belial, that knew not the Lord," whose downfall would precede a new order of government. Eli himself was not insensible to the impending evil; and, struck with the conviction of his house's approaching ruin, had reproved his consecrated sons, the heirs of his spiritual and temporal power, saying: "Why do ye such things, for I hear of your doings by all people; it is no good report that I hear."

The awful denunciation which foretold "that these, the descendants of Aaron, should be cut off in the flower of their age," was fulfilled to the letter. "The faithful

* Hannah's song—Samuel, chap. i.
† Ibid. verse 3.
‡ Ibid. verse 4.
§ Ibid. chap. ii. verse 8.
‖ Ibid. verse 3.

priest" who was to succeed them, the sole hierarch of Israel, in whose hands was to be lodged all power and office,* was already ministering at the altar, "being a a child girded with a linen ephod." His mother had been thanked by the aged Eli for the "loan which she had lent to the Lord," and he had blessed both Elkanah and his wife with this prayer so honourable to Hannah, "the Lord give thee seed of this woman," &c.† Hannah lived to see the fulfilment of her own fond prophecies and high intentions, and to behold, in the son of her vow, and the minister of her early consecration, "a prophet of the Lord, and a ruler of the people." "All Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord! and Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life."‡

CHAPTER VIII.

The Women of the Hebrews under the Monarchy. The Witch of Endor.

THE predestined greatness of the son of Hannah's prayer was accomplished. Her "asked of God," the infant votarist of her consecration, was raised over the people and the hierarchy, to all the power, spiritual and temporal, by which man has ruled most puissantly over his species. Prophet in the temple, sole sacrificer at the altar, warrior in the field, irresponsible ruler every where, he reigned in all the unquestioned authority of a theocrat, whose power (vested in his own person) was considered a "right divine." But again, the demoralization which follows irresponsible power, worked its natural consequences; and Samuel could not transmit to his degenerate sons the high destiny which his mother had worked out for him.

The yoke of hereditary spiritual authority, (even though

* Samuel, chap. xxii. verse 12. † Ibid. chap. ii. verse 20.
‡ Ibid. chap. vii. verse 15.

the priesthood was still preserved in the tribe of Levi), had been broken by Samuel himself; and in the lifetime of Eli, he had been elected to succeed him in that high and holy office, which his own sons should have inherited, had not "the sons of Belial," as Hannah named them, proved themselves unworthy, by their crimes, their impiety, and their incapacity!

The sons of Samuel, like those of Eli, wanting the personal and moral qualities of their father, to ensure their succession to his power and ministry, it was to no purpose that Samuel in his old age placed the executive in the hands of the two eldest, Joel and Abiah; for the people rejected them because they had sold justice, accepted bribes, trodden under foot the laws of the Lord, and of the land, plunging into the most voluptuous and disgraceful vices, and living without the fear of their God, their father, or their country!

Such were the accusations made by the delegates, the "elders of the people of Israel," when they went to the retreat of Samuel of Ramath, to refuse submission to the incapable governors he had appointed over them; declaring that the hierarchical government (respected in his inspired person), should end with his life. They desired to have a temporal chief—a king to judge them, like all the nations! The revolution in public opinion, (a new power in the state), announced in their demand, struck Samuel with displeasure and perplexity; and, ere he answered, he prayed to the Lord to assist him by his spirit. "And the Lord said unto Samuel: hearken unto the voice of the people, in all that they say unto thee." "Howbeit he protested solemnly unto them, and showed them the manner of the king that should reign over them."

It was then that Samuel drew the splendid and graphic picture of a despotic king—such as would once have struck the republican spirit of Israel with indignation and dismay:* and, if the hierarchy had not rendered itself so

* Rabbinical writers, and Josephus more particularly, considered the earliest form of political society among the Hebrews to have been a republic. Josephus, at least, in his History of the Jews, borrows that Greek term. "Voilà de quelle sorte la republique fut changée en royauté; car durant le gouvernement de Moise, et de Josué son successeur et general de l'armée, la forme du gouvernement estoit aristocratique: mais,

odious, in the eyes of the people, that even "the manner of king," which their high priest prophesied should reign over them, gained by the comparison, that picture must have stifled all desire of change. But it was in vain that his terrific denunciation wound up with a threat that "the day would come when they should cry out against the king, whom they had chosen."—"Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel, and they said: Nay, but we will have a king over us, that we may be like other nations, that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles."

The Israelites were no longer predatory wanderers in the desert: if they were still superstitious and stiff-necked in some instances, in others they were on a par with the surrounding policized and powerful nations, in imitation of whose institutes they desired a temporal and responsible chief. They had heard from an inspired woman, that the "Lord was a God of knowledge, by whom actions were weighed;" and, if their faith in the religion of their fathers was still strong, their blind submission to an hereditary and exacting priesthood was utterly shaken.

The venerable and inspired son of Hannah was still, however, the object of religious confidence, and even of their superstitious veneration. He was still their priest, their prophet, their "grand sacrificer," their "seer:" but they desired a lay chief, a political ruler, a great captain —an expedient adequate to their political necessities—a patriot leader or king, such as Hannah had predicted, "when she said that He who raised up the poor out of the dust, and lifted the beggar from the dunghill, and set them among princes,—He who would judge the ends of the earth would give strength to the king, and exalt the power of the anointed."

Samuel, haply, may have recalled this prophetic word of his mother, when, directed by inspiration, he sought for one answering to that prophecy, one whom the people

après la mort de Josué, personne n'ayant un souverain pouvoir, dix-huit ans se passerent dans l'anarchie. On revint ensuite à la première forme de gouvernement, et l'on donnoit la suprême autorité, sous le nom de Juge, à celui que son courage et sa capacité dans la guerre rendoient le plus digne de cet honneur: et les rois ont succedé à ces juges."—Histoire des Juifs, livre vi. chap. 6. page 317.

should approve, one whom he would prepare for his high calling, one whom he would anoint king, one who was not "of the princes," above whom "he was to be set," not of the elders, of the aristocracy of Israel, nor of the sacerdotal family of Levi, nor yet of "the poor raised out of the dust," but a man strictly of the people. Saul, according to his own modest account of himself, "was a Benjamite of the smallest tribes of Israel, whose family was the least of all families of the tribes of Benjamin." But "he was a choice young man and a goodly;" "and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he; from his shoulders and upwards he was higher than any of the people."

Such was the youth, who, in the simplicity of his age and class, stopped the high priest on his way to the great festival, given on the occasion of the sacrifice of the people, "in the High Place," and asked him: "Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is! for he came with a servant of his father's to ask advice of an honourable man, a seer, as to the fate of his father's asses which had been lost." And Samuel answered and said: "I am the seer."

The whole of the scene that follows is pregnant with inference; marked by the internal evidence of historic truth, and full of graphic beauty. The astounded Saul heard his high destiny from the prophet's lips with incredulity, and almost rejected the belief that he was the one in whom was all "the desire of Israel;" but when he was placed in, "the chiefest place," at the sacred festival, and distinguished by a princely portion of the service, when he was taken to the house of the hierarch prophet, honoured by "secret communion with him" on "the top of his house," when "the spring of the day came," and he was awakened by Samuel to accompany him beyond the city, when he was referred, for the accomplishment of his destiny, to the "prediction of the three signs," (the first of which was to be manifested at Rachael's sepulchre); and when, under the bright canopy of the morning heaven, he felt the holy oil poured on his fervid brow, with the prophetic words: "the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance!"—then the young and humble Benjamite felt the "spirit of the Lord" upon him;

he was "turned into another man;" and among the company of prophets who came to meet him with timbrels and harps, "he also prophesied."

The king thus solemnly prepared was, in due course of time, presented to the people of Israel by Samuel. The prophet had called them together by tribes, and by thousands, and, when he had bitterly reproached them for "rejecting their God," (or the hierarchical government) in favour of a king (or temporal chief), he pointed out to them him who, when he stood among the people, was higher than any of them, from his shoulders upwards! "See you him whom the Lord hath chosen; there is none like him among all the people!" The people acknowledged the supremacy of nature's own nobility in the elected of Heaven, and shouted that shout, heard for the first time in Israel, "God save the king!"

The captain of the people, thus consecrated and thus approved—young, brave, beautiful, and merciful—the true legislator of a government of sympathy—soon justified his election. He conquered whenever he fought, and saved whenever he dared. He adopted the valour and capacity of the well endowed: for, whenever he saw any strong or valiant man, "he took him unto him;" and with such men and his own brave spirit, he prostrated the enemies of Israel. "Whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed them" and "prevailed over all;" and many who had deserted to the enemy, and others who had hid themselves in Mount Ephraim, joined the standard of the popular chief.

Thus eminent, and thus supported, he soon became obnoxious to, and suspected of, the priesthood, and odious to the nobles. He had outraged the hierarchy who had raised him, by what was deemed an ill-timed mercy; and by what was felt to be a dangerous popularity: for the people, after one of Saul's victories, had turned upon Samuel, asking, "Who is he that said, shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death." To strengthen him on the throne, and, probably to thwart the priesthood, the people elected him again, of their own free will, king before the Lord; "all the men of Israel rejoicing greatly," so that the high priest reproached the

people with their ingratitude to himself, and their contempt of his rejected sons. Justifying his own integrity, also, Samuel "terrified them with thunder in the harvest time."

From that moment, Saul felt the power of the great sacerdotal conspiracy, which raised up a rival to his glory, and an anointed successor to his power. From that moment, the reign of Saul (the first on sacred record that stood in the gap of transition, between two great epochs of social history) became a tragic epic, full of dramatic action, grand, fantastic, and sublime!—the inspiration of the master-minds of future ages, the poetry of passion, an illustration of the philosophy of politics.

In the struggle Saul fell:—and the people whose opinions he represented, divided by that fickleness, which has ever been the curse of the ignorant, benefited not by a contest, of which he was the victim. Assailed by every evil that can outrage the feelings of man—as prince, patriot, father, friend—by conspiracy without, domestic treachery within, spiritually anathematized, virtually dethroned, reproached, humiliated, and maddened—the evil spirit of God came upon him; and the last act of his life's grand tragedy hastened to its close, in all the poetic sublimity in which it had risen.

Abandoned by all resources, divine and human, when his children had left him, when "the Lord had departed from him, when the prophets had deserted him," and "he was sore distressed,"—Saul, in his last dire necessity, sought for relief in that great dogma of the East, the divinity of woman's mind. He turned for counsel and for hope, to one whom he believed to hold spiritual communion with the dark and shadowy past, and to possess a prophetic power over the coming future. The great female seers, the prophetesses of more ancient times, the Miriams, and the Deborahs, and the Hannahs, had passed away; but there still existed "wise women" in Israel, whose acute perceptions of causes and their effects inspired a conviction of their superhuman intelligence,—of their possessing minds "which o'er-informed their tenements of clay."

Saul had banished these women out of the land, who haply saw too clearly and foretold too much! But, when

he was deserted by all, then "he said unto his servant, seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her and inquire of her." Such a woman was soon found in her den at Endor,* whither she had probably been hunted; and Saul, disguised and in "other raiment" than that of royalty went forth in the deep shadows of night, and sought the oracle of his stormy destiny from a woman's lips.

The scene that followed was grand and terrible. It has been imitated by every art, and equalled by none! Saul's address to the weird woman, made with the abruptness of habitual power, "I pray thee, divine unto me by thy familiar spirit;"—the proscribed woman's reproaching the disguised king with laying a snare for her life, "knowing how Saul had cut off those who had familiar spirits;"—Saul's emphatic oath, "as the Lord liveth, no punishment shall happen thee for this thing;" the conjuration of the spirit of Samuel—and the witch's exclamation, "why hast thou deceived me? thou art Saul;" —all these are finely preparative to the great denunciation which followed, that "the morrow should be the last day of Israel's independence, the last of Saul's and of his sons' existence;" for that "the Lord had rent the land out of his hand, and given it to his neighbour, even unto David!"

The crime which brought down this awful penalty was that "he had not obeyed the voice of the Lord, nor executed his wrath upon Amalek." Saul heard all this, with his face stooped to the ground: his head bowed, his spirit was broken, and at last he "fell straightway all along the earth." It is remarkable that the wise woman, the witch of Endor, in answer to his questions of "what she saw," replied, "the Gods ascending out of the earth! and an old man coming up in a mantle." Saul believed on the woman's evidence, and acknowledged the vision of Samuel, which her power had conjured!

But this witch, this "midnight hag"—this banished,

* The term "witch," used in our translation, gives a false and a vulgar colour to this incident. The woman of Endor was, most probably, a personage somewhat answering to the sibyls of classical antiquity, though at that time persecuted, and in disgrace with the government.

proscribed, desolate woman, thrown beyond all human communion, and baited even to "the death," was a woman still, full of tender sympathy, instinct with pity. When she saw the mighty king of Israel prostrate on the earth, and that "there was no strength in him, for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night," "the woman came unto Saul, and saw that he was sore troubled, and said unto him, behold thine handmaid hath obeyed thy voice, and I have put my life in thy hand, and have hearkened unto thy words which thou spakest unto me."

"Now, therefore, I pray thee hearken thou also to the voice of thy handmaid, and let me set a morsel of bread before thee, and eat, that thou mayest have strength when thou goest on thy way."

"And he refused and said, I will not eat. But his servants, together with the woman, compelled him; and he hearkened unto their voice; so he arose from the earth and sat upon the bed."

"And the woman had a fat calf in the house; and she hasted and killed it, and took flour and kneaded it, and did bake unleavened bread thereof."

"And she brought it before Saul, and before his servants, and they did eat; then they rose up and went away that night."*

All that was prophesied by the mysterious intelligence of this woman, or witch, came to pass; Saul, with his three sons, and Israel were overthrown. But Saul, though "sore wounded of the archers," fell by his own sword. Victorious even in defeat, he wrenched the glory of his death out of the hands of his enemies, and died with all the courage of a hero, and in all the majesty of a king! "One who saw him fall" (and lyingly boasted to David that he had killed him,) "brought the crown that was on his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm," to his rival and successor. David did not reject the royal insignia; but he smote the parasite who brought them "till he died;" smote him for having "slain the Lord's anointed," the first anointed king of Israel! Already David thought like a king, though he felt like a man; and punished the sup-

* 1 Samuel, chapter xxviii. verse 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25.

posed regicide who had invaded the holy sanctuary of a royal life, while he profited by the treason by which himself was raised to the throne of Israel.

The instant death of the vainglorious Amalekite was followed by that outburst of sorrow and indignation—that sublime requiem over the "mighty fallen," the "swifter than eagles," the "stronger than lions," the "beauty of Israel," the "lovely and pleasant in their lives who in their deaths were not divided,"—which must ever be considered as the highest poetry—poetry in all its intensity, gushing from the deepest sources of sensibility and of passion by which the heart of man can be stirred, affection and remorse. David loved Jonathan with a "love passing that of woman," as "Jonathan loved him as his own soul;" and he might have felt, that if "the mighty was fallen," it was he—the son and subject,—he who "had been set over the men of war" by Saul,—he, "the stripling,"* whom the king had taken into his own family, it was he, David, who had struck the first blow, that laid the Lord's anointed in the dust.

The elevation of David to the kingdom of Judah followed close upon the death of Saul. To this high dignity the son of Jesse had been called (as he himself said) by the men of Judah; "for your master, Saul, is dead, and the men of Judah hath anointed me king over them." But, though David had won the good will of Judah, the great conquest was yet to be achieved: for the army, and Abner, its general, had raised the surviving grandson of Saul, the unfortunate Ishbosheth, "to the throne of all Israel"—(the infant son of the brave and beautiful Jonathan having been saved and carried away "by his nurses.") The civil wars, which ensued between the adverse tribes, were carried on with relentless cruelty and base treachery, such as scripture has recorded as characterizing the hostilities of the Hebrews among each other. These horrors ended in the assassination of Ishbosheth, "while he slept;" and in the elevation of David to his throne and power; "for the elders of Israel made a league with him (David), and anointed him king over all Israel."

* 1 Samuel.

CHAPTER IX.

The Hebrew Women under the Monarchy, continued. Their social condition. Abigail. Michal. Bathsheba.

SAUL, the single-minded, the brave, spirited, and impetuous Saul, the founder of the Jewish monarchy, was succeeded by one whose temperament and character differed in every thing from his own, though his origin was the same, and his election, (humanly considered,) was based on the same qualities, and governed by the same expediency. David, when introduced to Saul by his bravery, having become the idol of the people, and the instrument of the hierarchy, fled from the not unjustifiable wrath of the king; and, at the head of a little band of six hundred desperate men, led a stealthy and predatory life, "abiding in the strongholds of the wilderness, and in the Mountain of the Desert of Zeph," until, "having found grace in the eyes of Achish," king of the Philistines, he became a subsidiary to the enemy of Saul, and begged the little territory of Ziklag, from whence he made many incursions on the surrounding tribes, "which secured him the protection of Achish."

But the Philistines suspected David; their princes "disallowed him;" they considered him as a spy on their movements, and "a deserter from his master, Saul:" for, when the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds and by thousands, and "David and his men passed in the rearward with Achish, they asked, What do these Hebrews here? Make this fellow return to his place, and let him not go down to battle with us; lest in battle he should be an adversary to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself to his master, Saul? Should it not be with the heads of these (our) men?" His royal protector was obliged to yield to the opinion of his military chiefs; and David, returning to his territory at Ziklag, found that in his absence with the army, his home had been spoiled,

and his two wives taken prisoners by a neighbouring tribe, the Amalekites.* David pursued the ravagers, recovered the spoils, rescued his wives, and was "returning victorious from the slaughter," when the news of the death of Saul and his sons was brought him.

The kingly power of Israel was now vested in one who was in the flower of manhood, (the prime of all the passions) and in all the high excitement of victory! He was the protected of the priesthood, the pride of the people; and, seeing that his kingdom was exalted, and his rule undisputed, he took the ancient monarchies of the East as the model of his own; he adopted their civilisation, affected their habits, and imitated their luxuries and their vices. Whatever was the nature of his connexion with Tyre, or his friendship with its king, he received from that powerful monarch cedar-trees for constructing, and expert workmen for raising, the first royal palace in Israel (in "the city of David"). He renewed (though he did not introduce) the Oriental institute of polygamy, by the example of his own boundless indulgence; and thus, in his own person, produced a great and fatal influence on the moral interests of society, and on the after events of his own life and reign.

Under the change of government effected by the force of circumstances, under the hierarchy of Samuel, the moral condition of the women of the Hebrews had undergone an obvious change—their agency having received a new direction; but still, they *were* agents, and their intellects took a wider developement, as they became more habitually applied to worldly affairs.

Saul, who had but one wife—whose state of king had been prophesied by one woman, and whose fate and death had been predicted by the ill-explained agency of another—was the first, in his kingcraft, (a trade soon learnt) to apply the subtle mind of woman as an instrument of state policy. He accordingly selected his own clever and deviceful daughter, Michal, and gave her as a wife to David, "to ensnare him." But David (astute as the king), at

* A natural reprisal, as David had "smote their land, and left neither man, nor woman, nor alien; and took away the sheep and oxen, the asses and the camels, and the apparel, and came to Achish."

first shrunk from the dangerous honour of "being a king's son-in-law."*

That Saul had raised the social state of woman is proved by "the daughters of Israel" being specially called on to "weep the death of him who had clothed them with scarlet and other delights, and enriched their apparel with ornaments of gold." This was the costume of the ladies of a sumptuous court, and not of the women of coarse servitude, the drawers of water, and the tenders of cattle,—the thrifty mothers who built up the house of Israel in the pastoral ages.

The monarchy of the Hebrews was as yet young; but their impressionable women underwent an early modification, coincident with the times. The servant, indeed, was still seeking to adapt her versatile powers to the intentions of her master; but the decorated slave of the harem, in striving to win her way to influence, exerted other properties of mind, than those which made the efficacy of her immediate predecessors. Hopeless of rights, she applied herself to secure privileges; and the poetical idiosyncrasy which had produced the Miriams and the Deborahs, so serviceable under the hierarchy, yielded at once to the more material pressure of a new necessity. Women were no longer priestesses, prophetesses, poetesses; but, as the wives and concubines of royal lovers, they became queens and stateswomen, the mothers of rival sons, abettors of the policy, or neutralizers of the views of their enamoured despots, as their own personal or maternal ambitions directed.

The introduction of Abigail, the wife of Nabal, on the scene of the stirring drama of David's life, presents a new character of woman, as different from the nomadic females of the pastoral ages of the Hebrews, as these were from the inspired prophetesses of the hierarchy.

David was yet wandering in the wilderness of Paran, with his predatory band of young men, when the necessities of his precarious life induced him to apply for relief to one "who lived in prosperity," to Nabal, a wealthy proprietor of Carmel. Nabal returned an answer full of

* 1 Samuel, chap. xviii.

insolence to a solicitation of more than Oriental courtesy. "Who is David?" he asks: "Who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master. And shall I take my bread, and meat, and water, prepared for my own shearers, and give it to men whom I know not, should they come!" To this answer David replied, by arming four hundred of his men; "girding on his sword, and marching upon Nabal;" and "evil was denounced against Nabal, and on all his household!" But there was a power greater than any which Nabal could summon to his aid—a power which returned the sword of David to its scabbard, and vanquished the all but indomitable spirit of the conqueror of Goliah. Near the covert of the hill, against which the fierce invader of private property was marauding, at the head of his well-armed and picked men, and at the moment when he was giving orders for a merciless pillage, which before "the morning light" was to desolate the dwellings and reduce the household of the "man of property" to ruin, he was suddenly stopped on his march by a woman, mounted on an ass, followed by a sumpter troop, laden with all that was necessary and all that was luxurious, to victual the little camp of the Desert of Paran. It was Abigail, the wife of the churlish and "evil-tongued Nabal;" a "woman of good understanding and beautiful countenance"—who, unknown to her hot-headed husband, had come forth, in her womanly consideration and intuitive discretion, to disarm the wrath of him whose vengeance was never slow, and whose vow of extermination had been witnessed by the heaven he invoked at the moment of her approach.

As soon as Abigail perceived the exterminator of the Amalekites, the conqueror of the Philistines, the feared of Israel, she alighted and "fell before him, and bowed herself to the ground."

"And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity fall; and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid.

"Let not my lord regard this man of Belial, even Nabal; for, as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name, and folly is with him. But I, thine handmaid, saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send.

"Now, therefore, my lord, as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the Lord hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies and they that seek evil unto my lord be as Nabal.

"And now this blessing which thine handmaid has brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord.

"I pray thee forgive the trespass of thine handmaid, for the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house, because my lord fighteth the battles of the Lord, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days.

"Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul; but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling.

"And it shall come to pass, when the Lord shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoke concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel, that this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself; but when the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid."*

If the power of eloquence is to be estimated by its application, and by its effect on the auditory to which it is addressed, the speech of Abigail was not surpassed by any on record. It is not the eloquence of words, it is the oratory of thought applied to the passions, to the prejudices, and the previous associations of its object. The manner of her supplication to be heard, the playful humour of her irony launched against the character of her brutal husband, her artful predictions of David's future elevation to the throne of Israel, her allusion to the envy of Saul, to the unavailing malice of David's enemies, and her plausible claim to his future respect and gratitude for having thus saved him from the crime of shedding blood causelessly, are all of the highest order of rhetoric, traits of the *finesse* and subtlety of female intellectuality.

* 1 Samuel, chap. xxv., verse from 24 to 31.

David, struck, enamoured, diverted from all his purposes of vengeance, heard her out; and then burst forth into that spirited benediction, which love and poetry have since faintly imitated in effusions that have become immortal.* "And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to me. And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand," &c.†

When Abigail returned to her home, she found her husband presiding over a feast, which, for its grandeur and luxury, was "like the feast of a king,"—the last he ever enjoyed. "But he was too merry of heart (for he 'was very drunk') for Abigail to commune with him; therefore she told him nothing less or more, till the morning light."

It was about ten days after this most dramatic and important interview, that "Nabal was smote by the hand of the Lord, and died;" and that "David immediately sent and communed with and took her to him to wife"—the insidious and influential successor of the high-minded Michal. David, however, shortly after associated Abigail with a sort of left-handed wife, of little renown, but of devoted fidelity (Ahinoam of Jezreel) who seems to have followed her husband or master through all the vicissitudes of the most precarious stages of his life.

But Michal, the wife of his youth, the saviour of his life, the contemner of his conduct, though now the wife of another (of Phaltiel), returned to his thoughts, when his hope of mounting the throne of her father brightened on his view; and when news of the treason of Abner, and his revolt, from Ishbosheth, was brought him, he sought to authorize his ambitious intentions by claiming back the daughter of the royal Saul. Ere he consented to conclude his league with Abner (of which the kingdom of Israel was to be the price), he demanded of the archtraitor the restoration of Michal; for David said, "Well, I will make a league with thee; but one thing I require!

* "Benedetto sia 'l giorno, e 'l mese, e 'l anno," &c.—Petrarcha, Son. xlvii.

† 1 Samuel, chap. xxv., verse 32, 33.

—that you shall not see my face till you first bring me Michal, Saul's daughter."

Messengers were forthwith sent to the feeble and foredoomed Ishbosheth, to deliver up his sister; and the reiterated demand of one, now too powerful to be refused, was soon obeyed. "Ishbosheth sent and took Michal from her husband, Phaltiel," "And her husband went with her along weeping behind her to Bahurim." But he wept in vain—and the indignant and royal Michal, "who despised David in her heart," was forced from her obscure happiness, to give new lustre to the throne, through the *prestige* which still irradiated the house of Saul, by being again added to the number of the new king's wives: for David, when he returned from Hebron, the capital of Judah, to Jerusalem, was accompanied by "many wives" and a numerous progeny.

"When David perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake," then "David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron, and there were yet sons and daughters born to David."

To these victims of an institution founded by the selfish tyranny and the licentious passions of man, (and revived by him who had been "taken from a sheepcot, and from following the sheep," to rule over Israel), others were added; and one above all others, who became a distinguished incident in the historical records of her country, as queen, stateswoman, and foundress of the glory of the most glorified of all Hebrew princes: this was the beautiful Bathsheba, the wife of the unfortunate Uriah.

The private crimes, the public disasters, the domestic miseries, which filled up the reign and shadowed the life of David,—which his conquests could not efface, nor his boundless power evade,—were the reaction of polygamy; a penalty on the injustice exercised on one half of the species by the other, through the superiority of physical force. It was thus that the caprice of an individual became the curse of a nation. The heart of David was hardened by sensual indulgence, until all human sympathy was extinguished; and his sense of moral right

became so perverted, that the obvious parable, addressed to him by Nathan, escaped his apprehension, until the reproachful prophet brought it home to his bosom, in the emphatic "Thou art the man."

It is further remarkable that the many children of his many wives respectively reflected his own crimes, and re-enacted his evil deeds against himself. His ingratitude to Saul (in seducing Jonathan into rebellion)—his cruelty to Saul's children and grandchildren (even to the sons of that beloved Jonathan)—were imaged and punished in the revolt of his own Absalom (a rebel to his father, and the murderer of his brother), in the outrage committed on the wretched Tamar, in the brutal crime of his son, Ammon, and in the seizure of his crown, while he yet lived, by the daring hand of that favourite and eldest born, whom he had fondly named his successor (the much-loved Adonijah).

These frailties of the father, so revisited on him through his children, were the subjects of those penitential effusions, which have become the poetical expression of sin and sorrow, and deep contrition, through the lapse of three thousand years.

In a political point of view, David's policy as a statesman became obviously feeble, in proportion as his moral delinquencies as a man became enormous. If to "be weak is to be miserable," to be wicked is to be weak. But David seems to have lost the respect of men, and the protection of Heaven, by the self-same obliquity of intellect. In the height of his power, the people rebelled and divided into factions; and he who had built "a cedar palace for himself," was not permitted "to raise a temple to the Lord." By acting as his own irresponsible minister, and "numbering the people," against the will of the priesthood, he lost the support of that still powerful party, which had raised him "from a sheepcot" to a "throne:" to that throne, from which they had hurled his predecessor.

But while this warrior, prophet, poet, king, has become a warning by his faults and an example by his contrition —while the men of his family violated every law of justice and humanity—what were the crimes and the

vices of the women? of the women whose lives he had degraded, whose minds he had perverted! Scripture, that veracious book of reference, which conceals not the failings of its elect, nor even the virtues of its outcasts, scripture records *not one!*—not one accusation starts forth against them. Michal, Abigail, Ahinoam, Haggith, Syloth, Bathsheba, with so many of lesser note, but haply not fewer charms,—all these, the victims of a system, as destructive of moral developement, as it was at variance with the natural justice of things,—the supposedly born servants of their divine-righted master, violated no law of nature, perpetrated no crime, committed no treachery, (none, at least, which history has recorded); and they are rarely cited, save when honourably brought forward in the exercise of some natural affection, or by the outbreak of some high quality of mind! Of this, the political interference of Bathsheba, in favour of Solomon, and the moral courage with which Michal reproached the effeminacy of her royal husband, were striking instances.

But while the royal wives and concubines of the Armon,* or of the "cedar palace," were alternately treated as queens or slaves, were employed as trustworthy servants, and "left to keep the house, and put in ward," or incarcerated as prisoners, and "shut up until the day of their death, living in widowhood," (as the expediency or satiety of their masters might happen to direct,) the females of other classes, less eminent in rank, were perpetually called into action for purposes of religious or state necessity: proving that the belief that women were in more immediate relation with Heaven than men, still prevailed. The wise woman of Tekoah was thus sent by Joab to effect a political stratagem in the court of David, and to cause the recall of his son Absalom. The graceful and astute manner in which she performed her secret services, forwarded the views of her party, subdued the wrath of David, and restored the fratricide, the "beautiful" Absalom, to his place in his father's favour.

Again, the womanly adroitness of the "wise woman of Abel in Bethmaachah" saved her native city. She is

* The Hebrew Harem.

represented as "counselling the people in her wisdom," and conferring with the general of the besiegers! Her beautiful exordium is full of demonstrations of the deference paid to such women, in times of the greatest public conflicts.

Thus, too, the wife of Jeroboam became the secret agent and disguised ambassadress of an ambitious husband, who sends her to Ahijah,* the prophet, to secure his prayer and protection for their son. Wherever the instrumentality of mind was wanting, the Hebrew women were still, as of old, found coming to the aid of their masters, with powers fully equal to the especial occasion.

That the Hebrew women under the early monarchy transacted business, carried on commercial speculations, and performed all agencies in which forethought and judgment were necessary, (while their masters were engaged in slaughtering their species), is proved by the testimony of one, who, though not prone to flatter them, was yet compelled, in the midst of his seven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines, to estimate a "virtuous woman's price as above rubies." That such women did exist, is further proved even by that portrait of the "lively Hebrews," which includes every virtue constituting the merit, and entering into the true destiny of the sex.

Such were the women who "considered a field and bought it, and planted a vineyard" with the fruit of their own hands; who "made fine linen and sold it, and delivered girdles to the merchants;" who "purchased wool and flax, and worked willingly with their own hands;" who "rose while it was yet night, and gave meat to their household, and tasks to their maidens;" and who, while they "stretched forth their hands to the needy, and opened it to the poor," were themselves "clothed in silk and purple," and "surrounded by coverings of tapestry;" looking well to their households, and "not eating the bread of idleness." Well might "the hearts of their husbands trust" in such women, "by whom the number of their days were doubled," and rejoice in the possession

* There is a beautiful picture of this interview by Angelica Kaufman.

of such servants as left them "no need of spoil;" (*i. e.* no necessity of a sanguinary struggle for subsistence, to the men whose life had hitherto been warfare, and whose object was plunder.) It is remarkable that while the men of Israel were perpetually in the battle-field, the women were incessantly occupied with the arts of peace and utility—arts which alone forward the blessings of civilisation, and foster the better virtues of humanity.

From the earliest establishment of the monarchy, state-craft, assuming a new form, was transferred to the interior of the palace; and personal influence with the monarch was substituted for nobler agencies, in the conduct of affairs. If, under this new condition, female intervention became more common, it was usually founded on qualities the least elevated and estimable; and the ends to which it was directed too frequently partook of the corruption of the means. That such was not always the case, that the women sometimes rose above the atmosphere of an Oriental court, and threw their weight into the scale of patriotism and public happiness, is an honourable evidence of virtues in despite of circumstance, and of energies capable of escaping from a prescribed path.

In the last years of David's reign, and as the "days of the king drew near that he should die," Israel was rent by the hostile factions of his two rival sons, Adonijah, the eldest, brother of his beloved Absalom, and Solomon, the youngest, the only son of the beautiful and influential Bathsheba. The fond and enfeebled father had accorded, while he yet lived, to his favourite Adonijah all the insignia of royalty, and had even permitted him to proclaim himself king, and to go forth with the customary royal retinue of "chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him." David had not at any time "displeased this favoured son" by saying "why hast thou done so?" for Adonijah, like his unfortunate brother, was beautiful in his person "and a goodly man," and "his mother bore him after Absalom"—both of them strong claims to the predilection of David.

Joab, the captain-general of the army, had long espoused the cause of Adonijah; so did the flower of the men of Judah, and many of his own numerous brothers; and they

all attended a feast, which the young king (de facto) of Israel gave to his adherents at Enrogel, in the suburbs of Jerusalem.* But among these brothers, Solomon (the youngest) was not invited; and among these partisans, neither the high priest, Zadoc; nor Nathan the prophet, minister of David; nor Benaiah, the captain of his guards, appeared. They were the friends of Bathsheba, and the supporters of her son's pretensions, (for rights he had none,) to the throne.

At the moment when the royal revels of Adonijah were still celebrating, Nathan hastened to Bathsheba, to acquaint her with a circumstance, which threatened ruin to her maternal ambition, and to his own views. "Get thee" (he said) "unto King David, and say unto him, didst not thou, my lord! O king! swear unto thy handmaid, saying, assuredly thy son, Solomon, shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne! Why then doth Adonijah reign? Behold, while thou yet talkest with the king, I shall come in after thee, and confirm thy words."

The scene that followed (so feebly described by the lay chronicler† of the Jews) is too full of admirable and curious detail, to need an apology for transcribing it. Bathsheba went immediately into the king's chamber, "who was very old." She found his young and innocent nurse,‡ Abishag, "ministering to his infirmities;" and, bowing to him, she entered at once on her mission. "My lord, thou swearest by the Lord thy God unto thine handmaid, saying: assuredly, Solomon, thy son, shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne. And now, behold, Adonijah reigneth; and now, my lord the king, thou knowest it not.

"And thou, my lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are upon thee, that thou shouldst tell them, who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him.

"Otherwise it shall come to pass, when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be counted as offenders.

* Josephus. First Book of Kings. † Josephus, book 7, chap. 9.

‡ The virtue of the young Abishag, the Sœur de Charité of the aged and dying king, is celebrated by Josephus, and authenticated by the scripture.

"And lo, while she yet talked with the king, Nathan the prophet also came in.

"And they told the king, saying, Behold Nathan the prophet! And when he was come in before the king, he bowed himself before the king, with his face to the ground," &c.*

Nathan spoke as had been previously arranged with the queen. "King David answered and said, Call me Bathsheba: and she came into the king's presence and stood before the king.

"And the king sware and said, As the Lord liveth that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress, even as I sware to thee by the Lord God of Israel, &c. even so will I certainly do this day.

"Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the earth, and did reverence to the king, and said, Let my lord, King David, live for ever!"

Solomon was instantly proclaimed king by the high priest, Zadoc, by Nathan the prophet, by Benaiah, the captain of the household troops; and by the Cherethites and the Pelethites ("mighty men"). He was mounted, also, on the old king's mule, and anointed by Zadoc with the "oil out of the tabernacle," while the trumpet's blast and the cries of "God save King Solomon" first announced to Adonijah, and "to all his guests," the astounding event of his young brother's inauguration—"for they had not yet risen from table."

So prompt and so decisive was the conduct of Bathsheba and her partisans, that it changed the line of descent, and set aside the law of primogeniture in the house of David, when the king's preference for his eldest son had nearly established it by a first, and a consequential precedent. The unfortunate Adonijah sought safety in the sanctuary of the temple, and "seized the horns of the altar," while he awaited the decision of Solomon.

The powerless and bereaved David died soon after, bequeathing to his successor all that was left him to bestow,—his advice, as a king—and his vengeance, as a man!†

* 1 Kings, chap. i.

† To bring "the hoar heads (of his old enemies), Joab and Shimei, down to the ground with blood."—*Kings.*

When Solomon had ascended the throne of his father,* "and his kingdom was established," the agency of his mother, near that throne to which she had raised him, became apparent, in the application made to her womanly feeling and political influence, by the unfortunate brother of Absalom. The defeated king of Israel, Adonijah, had purchased the mercy of Solomon, by an oath of allegiance, and immediate retirement into obscurity: he had been "sent home to his house." Yet, on his seeking an audience of the royal mother, her first cautious question was, "Comest thou peaceably?" "Peaceably," he replied; for his was an errand of love, not of war; and she bade him "say on."

"Thou knowest" (said the frank and ardent Adonijah), "thou knowest that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel set their faces on me, that I should reign. Howbeit the kingdom is turned about, and is become my brother's, for it was his from the Lord; and now I ask one petition of thee!—deny me not!"

The queen only replied, "Say on."

"Speak, I pray thee, unto Solomon, the king," continued Adonijah, "for he will not say thee nay! Speak that he give me Abishag, the Shunammite, to wife."

Bathsheba, relieved by the nature of the petition, entered at once with womanly sympathy into the honest views of that unfortunate step-son, on whom so lately "all Israel set their faces that he should reign;" and whose submission to the king's pleasure, in an affair so purely of the heart, evinced either his loyalty, or the Oriental despotism of the new government of Israel.

Bathsheba instantly promised to intercede for him. "Well, I will speak for thee to the king!" was her answer; "And therefore she went to King Solomon, to speak unto him for Adonijah."

The manner of her reception in the court, where the king sat enthroned, is curious. On her approach, "the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself to her:" and though he resumed his throne, "he caused a seat

* Josephus makes it appear that Solomon was but nineteen, when his mother placed him on the throne.

to be set for the king's mother," "and she sat on his right hand." Between these gorgeous forms of royalty of the first hereditary sovereign of the Jews, and the "palm-tree" of Deborah, "the ruler over Israel," what a contrast!

The immediate request of "the king's mother"—the almost playful manner in which she introduces her "petition"—is extremely feminine and beautiful. "I desire one small petition of thee! I prithee say me not nay."* The king replied—"Ask on, my mother! for I will not say thee nay."

"Then," said the queen, "let Abishag, the Shunammite, be given to Adonijah, thy brother, to wife."

At this request, in which the tender association of brotherhood is conjured up with womanly insinuation, the affectionate familiarity of the royal son suddenly changes to the fiercest and most reproachful rage of the offended sovereign. "The king answered to his mother, saying, and why dost thou ask Abishag, the Shunammite, for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also! for he is my elder brother!—even for him, and for Abiathar, the priest, and for Joab, the son of Zeruiah (the political partisans of Adonijah). God do so unto me, and more also, if Adonijah hath not spoken this word (made this request) against his own life! As the Lord liveth, who hath established me on the throne of David, my father, and who hath made me an house as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death this day."

Imagination fills up this most dramatic of all recorded scenes with all the striking details of which it was susceptible—the crowd of subservient slaves, the ready ministers of irresponsible power—Benaiah, the captain of the army, receiving the order, and hastening "to slay Adonijah to the death"—the terrified Abiathar, suddenly thrust out from his holy office, "as worthy also of death," and banished as a partisan of the devoted brother of the king. But, among all these groupings of male servility to the master, one form comes out, of noble bearing, sublime in her holy mission of humane conciliation, and family concord, and

* In the Hebrew, "turn not away thy face."

pitiable in her blasted feelings of maternity! It is the servant, woman! It is the horror-struck and still beautiful Bathsheba! It is the "king's mother;" she who made him king! whose timely and well-exercised moral influence over the mind of the enfeebled and dying father placed the youngest of his sons, a boy in years, upon the throne of the eldest; and who now, with her intuitive perception, (a woman's wisdom), must have seen, in this act of sanguinary despotism, (that master-fault in politics) an unnecessary crime!

Solomon thus began his magnificent reign, by an act of sudden and uncontrolled passion, stamping the wisest of his race with that blasting sin, which drove the first-born man to social outlawry,—the sin of fratricide! But, of Bathsheba—the kind, the conciliating, the wise, but no longer powerful, Bathsheba—she who so lately "sat at the king's right hand," no more is heard; and whatever was the after-fate of one so influential in Jewish story, her death was unrecorded.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

The Women of the Hebrews under the Monarchy. The Queen of Sheba.

SOLOMON (according to the scriptures) ascended the throne of Israel four hundred and eighty years after the Exodus of the Jewish tribes out of the "land of Egypt." Although the Rabbins assert that the wealth amassed and left by David to his son was so immense, as to render his very tomb an exchequer to future governments,* yet no means, merely human, can account for the astounding disbursement of treasures, recorded between the beginning and the close of a reign, the most magnificent ever registered, in the royal fasti of any age or region. Between the simple "curtained ark" of the holiest of times, the "Holy of Holies," "carried on men's shoulders," and that mighty Temple, the world's wonder, and the age's miracle, (whose lofty domes were "overlaid with pure gold," whose marble and cedar chambers were "partitioned with chains of gold," whose columns were chaptered with clusters of golden fruit and flowers, and chapleted with "lilies and pomegranates,") what an interval of progress in art and sumptuousness! Between the predatory

* "King Solomon, his son, had him buried at Jerusalem with such magnificence, that in addition to the usual ceremonies that take place at the funerals of kings, he had his sepulchre filled with the most immense sums. 1300 years after this event, Antiochus having besieged Jerusalem, Hircan, the high priest, wanting to bribe him with money to raise the siege, and not being able to procure it otherwise, he opened the sepulchre of David, and drew from it 3000 talents, &c. Again, some time after, Herod took a large sum from another part of this sepulchre, where these treasures were hidden."—*7th book, chap.* 12, *Josephus's History of the Jews.*

life and warfaring vicissitudes of Saul and of David,* and the pompous state, and voluptuous repose of him, who legislated from a "throne of ivory, overlaid with pure gold," amidst provincial satraps and tributary princes—what a contrast!

Imagination can lend no link to unite such eras in social progress, so near, and yet so remote. In the scriptural details (admirable and curious) of the building of the Temple of Jerusalem (which occupied seven years), of "the king's house of Millo, and of the house of Pharaoh's daughter," of the ivory palace, and the house of the forest of Lebanon, the perfection of modern art appears anticipated, and the resources of modern treasuries surpassed! The most cunning artists of Tyre and Egypt were invited and munificently rewarded, to perfect the great works of Jerusalem, public and domestic, which soon surpassed those of the ancient and polished cities, whence Israel borrowed her sudden influx of civilisation. An army of thirty thousand men was sent to cut down cedar trees in the woods of Lebanon, and fleets were manned with foreign pilots, and sent to India to be freighted with "gold from Ophir."

Gems and jewels, ivory and precious perfumes, were supplied by the "merchant-men, and the traffic of the spice-merchants," and by "all the kings of Arabia," and by the "governors of the country," until the very shields and targets of the royal armoury were of "beaten gold," and all the "utensils of the temple," the "king's drinking vessels," and "the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon, were of pure gold"—"for silver was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon." "Nay, it came to be in Jerusalem as stones, and even cedar wood became as sycamore trees (that are in the valley) for abundance."†

Besides the fleet which brought "gold from Ophir," and almug trees (for the construction of "musical instruments, harps, and psalters for singers,") the king kept at sea the

* "And Solomon spoke to Hiram, saying: Thou knowest how that David my father could not build an house unto the name of the Lord his God, for the wars which were about him on every side, until the Lord put them under the soles of his feet." 1 Kings, chap. v. verse 2 and 3.

† 1 Kings, chap. x.

navy of Tharshish (that of Hiram), which, once in three years, brought gold and silver, and ivory, and apes, and peacocks, (the true appendages of a royal menagerie); while fourteen hundred chariots, forty thousand horses, and twelve thousand horsemen, completed the household troops, which remained "with the king in Jerusalem."

Solomon's dominions rapidly increased by alliances, by treaties, and by conquest; and extended from the "lands of the Philistines to the borders of Egypt," and from "the Euphrates to the Syrians."

"And so Solomon reigned over all kingdoms, from the river, unto the land of the Philistines," and "from Tiphsah even to Azzah, over all the kings on this side of the river."*

From other states, also, "Solomon did levy a tribute of bond service," the Israelites being "men of war," the master caste, who disdained to work; they were the king's servants, "of whom he made no bondsmen;" for "they were his princes and his captains, the rulers of his chariots and his horsemen." Besides his works in Jerusalem, and throughout Palestine, Solomon raised also cities in the desert, and "built Baleth and Tadmor in the wilderness."

The priesthood now saw the aspirations of their ancient prophets and great lawgiver accomplished, and witnessed the temporal as well as the spiritual triumph of that sublime religion, of which they had been the vigilant and hereditary guardians. When they beheld that grand ceremonial, the feast of the dedication, "when Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord, in the presence of all the congregation of Israel," surrounded by "the elders of Israel, by the chief of the fathers, and by the children of Israel," when he stood in the front of that glorious temple, where he had first enshrined the ark† and turned his face, and blessed all the congregation, and exhorted the people, and made a sacrifice of two and twenty thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep—then

* 1 Kings, chap. iv. Josephus.

† It is remarkable that this sacred object contained nothing, save two tables of stone, which Moses had put there at Horeb.

the hierarchy must have believed that the most powerful king of the earth was the most devoted servant of the Lord, and the most strenuous supporter of its own power.*

Solomon thus gave to a pure and simple dogma an external pomp and circumstance, which enlisted every human art in its service. The poetry of religion could go no further, and its solemnity has never since been more imposingly or more majestically represented.

The wisdom of Solomon, like his piety and his riches, were now said to surpass that of all the kings of the earth; and many of the kings of the most ancient states sent their sages and wise men to hear his proverbs and his enigmas. One, however, of his royal contemporaries, not trusting to delegated sagacity, came in person, to "prove him with hard questions." This enterprising and learned one, was a woman!—according to Josephus, Nicaulis, queen of Egypt and Ethiopia;† but better known, as the Queen Sheba of scriptural writ.

This daughter of a land, where the idea of supreme wisdom was worshipped in a female form, this royal and philosophical pilgrim, who came "to prove" the wisest of men and greatest of sovereigns "with hard questions," came not in the guise of a frugal pedant, nor simply as "a wise woman," but, like the Semiramis of her time,‡ she entered Jerusalem "in an equipage worthy so great a queen."§ Camels were laden with tributes of utility and value, ingots of gold and silver, precious stones, curious perfumes, plants of the most healing and odorous qualities, unknown even to that great naturalist, "who could speak and write of all things" in the book of nature, "from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall." Beyond all her other offerings, was her present which first introduced the balm plant into the country: "for, till the queen of Ethiopia arrived at Jerusalem," there was "no balm in Gilead." "We owe to the liberality of that great queen" (says Josephus) "the introduc-

* 1 Kings, chap. x.

† Much doubt subsists among the learned, concerning the place whence this personage came.

‡ See 1 Kings, chap. x. § Josephus.

tion of the single plant of balm, from which the herb is now so multiplied, and has become so abundant throughout Judea."

It appears that the wise and magnificent Nicaulis inspired scarcely less admiration, than she herself felt for Solomon; for "she communed with him of all that was in her heart," and he not only answered all her questions, "but there was not any thing hid from the king which he told her not."*

The grandeur and luxury of Solomon's court and capital seem to have struck even her, who had the revenues of a province for the maintenance of her sandals, with as much wonder as his wisdom; and the representative† of Pharaoh may have borrowed, from the descendant of her ancestors' bondsmen, ideas of sumptuous prodigality and magnificence, of which Minos and Sesostris never dreamed. "She admired," say the Rabbins, "the service of his table, the order of his household, the attendance of his menials, and their apparel, and his cup-bearers;" and Josephus relates that, above all, she admired that beautiful and superb hall, called the forest of Lebanon, in which the most sumptuous of the royal feasts were celebrated. "It was a true report," she said, "that I heard in mine own land of thy wisdom." "Howbeit I believed not the words until I came, and my own eyes had seen it, and behold the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the accounts which I have heard."

In return for homage so flattering and so just, "King Solomon gave unto the Queen of Sheba" "all her desire," "whatsoever she asked," "besides that which he gave her of his royal bounty." "So she turned and went to her own country, with her servants."

* 1 Kings, chap. x.

† Pharaoh was a regal title in Egypt, and borne by each monarch in succession, like that of Ptolemy, or of Cæsar among the Romans. Josephus presumes that Herodotus did not separately name each of the three hundred kings who followed after Minos, because they were all known by this common appellative; and that, when he spoke of a female who reigned after them, he failed not to say that she was named Nicaulis, because the men alone were called Pharaoh. "I find also (he adds) in our chronicles that no king of Egypt, after Solomon's father-in-law, was called Pharaoh, and this Princess Nicaulis is the same who visited the Jewish king, as I shall presently relate."—Josephus, book vii. chap. ii.

This visit of the Queen of Egypt to Jerusalem is a memorable fact in the history of a sex, taunted with its feebleness and intellectual incapacity. The equal terms on which the wisest of men communed with and confided in this woman of another land and another faith, is a corollary to his own adage; for here was a woman "who opened her mouth with wisdom, and on whose tongue was the law of kindness."

CHAPTER II.

The Women of the Hebrews under the Monarchy. The Egyptian Princesses. The Women of Strange Gods in Israel.

ALL the earth (says the scripture) now sought Solomon, to hear the wisdom which "God had put into his heart;" "for he had wisdom, and understanding, and largeness of heart, even as the sands on the sea-shore, excelling all the children of the East country, and all the wisdom of Egypt." He composed a thousand and five hymns, or songs, and spoke three thousand proverbs; and those who came "to hear the wisdom of Solomon from all parts of the earth," purchased the privilege by "bringing every man his presents, vessels of gold, and garments, and spice, horses, and mules, a rate year by year." Yet this more than human wisdom and mortal power, this high supremacy in all things, this mastery over the minds, the opinions, the lives, the fortunes, and the liberty of millions, this highest monopoly of human prosperity and glory, ever cited in the records of six thousand years, suddenly passed away like the dream of a vision! Faith abandoned the most zealous worshipper of Jehovah, even while his votive hecatombs yet flooded the streets of Jerusalem with blood, and while the air was filled with the odours of his incense, "which smelt to Heaven." Power melted from the hands of the mightiest, wisdom from the mind of the wisest, and the world's consideration was suddenly turned into its pity

and contempt. Another Samuel had already raised another David* to fill the throne of Solomon, while he yet lived; and his own servant was "to reign according to all that his soul desired, and to be king over Israel in his stead:" for "the Lord said unto Solomon, I will surely rend thy kingdom from thee, and give it to thy servant."

Accordingly, the divine denunciation against his race by the mouth of the priesthood, constituted the last sounds that blasted the ear of the dying king, ere he slept "with his fathers." The priesthood had abandoned him, and the requiem raised over "the tomb of David," ere it closed upon his gorgeous son, was that war-cry of an emancipated nation, "to your tents, oh Israel!" "The people abhorred him." Ten of the tribes simultaneously abandoned his house, two only remaining faithful; "and that not for his sake, but for David his father's sake!"

The kingdom of Israel, torn by civil wars, was thus rent in twain; a sanguinary prelude to successive captivities, and to the utter dispersion of its people. But what was it that effected all this? Who caused this mightiest revolution in the life and character of any human being on record? What unholy alliance of jealous kings perpetrated the fall of him, greater than all kings? What conspiracy of mighty men within his own dominions hurled this wisest of all men from his acmé of intellectual supremacy? The inspired author who wrote the chronicles of those times, and the lay historian who preserved the traditions of his own nation, have alike declared that Solomon, the greatest and wisest of men, fell—not by the physical or moral force of man, but by woman: it was the servant who overthrew the master, it was the slave who dethroned the sovereign!—it was the idolatress who prostrated the royal pontiff, the most zealous votarist of Jehovah, before "the altar of Ashtaroth, the goddess of the Zidonians."

* Elijah, the prophet, met the young and brave Jeroboam as he went out of Jerusalem, and when "they two were alone in the field," prophesied to him. "Behold I rend the kingdom out of the hands of Solomon, and will give it to thee." This recalls a similar incident in the lives of Saul and David.—Kings, chap. xi. v. i.

CHAPTER III.

The Women of the Hebrews on the separation of Israel and Judah. Jezebel. Athaliah.

When Moses in his prophetic spirit foretold that the restless tribes (which he found it so arduous to lead, so difficult to control) would eventually change the form of their spiritual government into one purely temporal, he drew for them that model of a constitutional monarchy, which, whether borrowed from the wisdom of Egypt, or originated in his own, represented in its principle the chief magistracy of a commonwealth, rather than the irresponsible power of absolutism. He commanded the Hebrews never to admit of a foreign power over them, but to "choose one from their own brethren," one who "should not lift up his heart above his own brethren," "nor multiply to himself wives, nor silver, nor gold."* He cautioned them against their tendency to Polygamy, and directed his severest canons against the introduction of "strange women" into a community, that had been held together, not by power or dominion, but by the popular zeal for that sublime religion, which their own women had mainly contributed to preserve. This they had effected not only by their spiritual efforts, but by the influence of their temperament upon successive generations; for of the purity of descent, the women alone can have true cognizance,—man must take it upon trust.

That strange women would turn away the hearts of the elect to their own false gods, was the constant precept of the hierarchy, the depositaries of all knowledge, who considered the influence of women over the mind of man as the leading dogma of their creed. But from Moses to Malachi, the warning was given in vain.†

There were still, in the days of Solomon, "wise women in Israel, and beautiful, among the daughters of Pales-

* Deuteronomy, xvii. 14, 20. † Malachi, chap. ii.

tine;" who, like Hannah and Bathsheba, were still worthy to serve the altar, or the throne—such women as other Elis might listen to in the Temple, and other Nathans hold counsel with "in the king's chamber." But Solomon was not that type of a constitutional monarch, drawn by the inspired lawgiver of the Jews. He was "that manner of a king," which Samuel described, after the Oriental despotisms of the nations which surrounded Israel, a king of castes, and privileges, and representations, one who did assume unlimited power, and "lifted his heart over his brethren," one who, with the craft of modern diplomacy, sought alliances with ancient dynasties, careless whether their daughters worshipped at the shrine of the Theban Jupiter, or sacrificed in the sanctuary of Memphis!

He took the first and most honoured of his wives from among the worshippers of Isis; and when he placed the descendant of three hundred kings on the newly-raised throne of Israel, he paused not to consider that his union with this "daughter of a strange god" was a union alike against the law and the prophets.

But besides his lotus-crowned lady of the Nile, (the daughter of the reigning Pharaoh, "that spring shut up, that fountain sealed," who sung so sweetly and so confidently, "my beloved is mine, and I am his,"*) "Solomon loved many other strange women," and levied a bond-service of youth and beauty upon every surrounding state. The Ammonites, the Edomites, the Zidonians, all contributed to fill the gilded cages of "the house of the forest of Lebanon,"—until one thousand women, (seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines) incarcerated for the caprice and pleasure of one man, established the old institute of polygamy upon its greatest extension. The harem of Solomon thus became the prototype of an evil, which still presses on the life-nerve of society, from the seraglio of the Brother of the Sun, down to the last haunt of human suffering and violence, of man's injustice, and of woman's wrongs, among the least of the British dependencies in India.†

* On this canticle, see the Bible illustrated by Egyptian Monuments, by Dr. W. C. Taylor: a work of great interest.

† Cutch. See Mrs. Postan's Random Sketches.

Solomon, in consideration of his faith, and his zeal, had been permitted to make "the yoke grievous to the people," so "that Israel departed unto their tents," indignantly exclaiming, "What portion had they in David's nation? had they inheritance in the son of Jesse?" For though the king had thus forfeited the political sympathy of the people, the powerful hierarchy still clung to the son of David, the founder of the Temple of Jerusalem: nor did they desert him until the epoch when "his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and cleaving unto them in love," he became the proselyte of the "strange women" whose persons he had enslaved, but whose minds he could not subdue.

Within view of his own temple, Solomon "built a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, and for Moloch, the abomination of the children of Ammon:" thus "did he likewise for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods." It was then that the women, "the strange women," in defiance of the sacerdotal power that had denounced them, and of the irresponsible despotism that had degraded them, wrenched a poetical justice from the very institute by which they were outraged. The victims of polygamy avenged themselves through polygamy; and these worshippers of strange gods, by abusing their influence, betrayed to destruction the founder of the Temple of the "one and only true God." Separated from home, country, kindred, they still clung to their own religion, which, false as it was, was their mother's faith, —imbibed with the first nutriment drawn from their mother's bosom, and interwoven with all their indestructible affections, and earliest associations; and Israel thus fell through the frailty of him, who had raised it to its highest pinnacle of glory—fell never again to be restored to its original brightness, to its unity, and integrity.

The spiritual halo which had hung over it a light, even in the darkest times, melted away; its successive struggles were no longer between mind and matter, the spirit and the flesh—the priest and priestess against the unimpressionable masses of a stiff-necked people, who worshipped now a God, and now a calf!—It was brute force, against brute force. Absolute despotism had destroyed public

spirit, and given a new turn to the genius and the fortunes of the nation; and, from that time, its history is summed up in a succession of wars (often without national object, and always disorganizing)—wars, merciless and degrading—carried on with disgusting cruelties, and ending in inglorious captivities, or followed by contemptible and temporary restorations.

In such contests, founded in the worst passions, and perpetrated by the worst means (fanaticism and treason), the moral agency of which woman had so long been the impersonation, was rarely applicable or called for; and from the decline of the sacerdotal power, (the power, in those remote times, of an exclusive knowledge over widely diffused ignorance) and from the subsequent establishment of military despotism, the women of the Hebrews came forth more rarely and less efficiently, than in the antique times of their remote and simpler history. They withered under the vices which the Jewish monarchies borrowed from the Asiatic nations; they were crushed in the conflict between a persecuting priesthood and a schismatic people; and they were not necessary in those sanguinary events, which filled up the measure of the "tribulation of Israel," and her crimes. Yet still, whenever they do appear, as queens, stateswomen, champions, or patriots, they come forth in illuminated characters, brightening the page they occupy; sometimes indeed sharing the crimes of the men, but oftener surpassing them in intellectual device, and fearless volitions.

Even the characters of the dauntless and guilty queen of Ahab, king of Israel, the anathematized Jezebel and her immortal daughter Athaliah, held forth by the Jewish priesthood, for the express execration of their own times, and of posterity,—bold and bad as they were, still rose superior to the weak and wicked men who surrounded and opposed them.

The powerful king of Israel, Ahab, returning home "heavy and displeased," because he had been frustrated in an act of puerile despotism, by the sturdy independence of Naboth, who refused to part with his vineyard for money, Jezebel meets her royal husband with a wife's anxiety, and a woman's quick perception, and asks,

"Why is thy spirit so sad that thou eatest not bread?" "Because" (he replies) "I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money, or else, if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard." "And Jezebel his wife said unto him, dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel! arise, and eat bread, and let thy heart be merry, *I* will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters to the nobles, and to the elders, that were in his city dwelling with Naboth. And she wrote in the letters, saying, "Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people," &c. &c. &c.*

The crime of Jezebel was enormous, and though Ahab, in profiting by it, shared the criminality, he wanted the hardihood and decision which urged his guilty wife to perpetrate the deed. Her equal in guilt, he was her inferior in device and courage.

But still the greatest error attributed to Jezebel was her resistance to the Jewish priesthood: for she was the daughter of the king of Tyre, and, professing the religion of her fathers, had her own temple raised, by Joab's permission, with her own priests, to the number of four hundred. All these were massacred by the state hierarchy of Judah, with her husband Ahab's offspring, and her own damsels, together with many of Ahab's great men, and his kinsfolk, and his priests, all of whom were put to death, until none "were left remaining."

This was an awful retribution. Jehu, the instrument of this priestly vengeance, the anointed usurper of her husband's throne, the destroyer of her family, of her friends, her kindred and her partisans, excused his outrage by the prophecy of Elijah, by whom the death of the proud Jezebel herself was predicted, even to its minutest and most ferocious detail.

Throughout all the history of this bold and bad woman, she appears to have been superior in firmness of purpose to the weak and vacillating man to whom she was united,

* 1 Kings, chap. xxi. This is one of the earliest instances of female letter-writing on record.

and upon an equality in courage with the bad man against whom she was opposed.

Her genius, her prowess, and her misfortunes were inherited by her ill-starred daughter Athaliah, by her marriage, Queen of Judah. A further illustration of the intellectual powers and lofty aspirations of women, (though misdirected by adverse circumstances, and fatally influenced by the dark state of society in which she flourished) Athaliah was not, like her mother, a Tyrian princess, "the daughter of a strange land." She was a Hebrew, the daughter of Ahab, king of Israel; and, in order to estimate, if not to justify her character and actions, it is necessary to recall the leading points of the times, in which she played her awful part.

The kingdom of Solomon had been rent asunder at his death, and divided into two states, Judah and Israel. The kingdom of Judah was composed of the two tribes, Benjamin and Judah, (and its kings were descended from David.) Their capital was Jerusalem, the residence of the priestly Levites, the pretorian bands of Judaism. Since by the law none could offer sacrifice to the Lord, but in the temple built by Solomon, and consecrated by the priesthood, the legitimate worship could only subsist in Judah, the seat of all orthodoxy. From the most remote parts, the faithful were obliged to visit this glorious monument of spiritual greatness, for the prescribed celebration of all religious feasts and festivals. There, only, were they permitted to offer sacrifices, and not "on the high places;" and there they brought their tributes, to increase the magnificence of the most powerful and gorgeous hierarchy, that ever reigned over the minds and actions of men.

But a large part of the faithful were far out of Judah; and the ten tribes which had deserted the house of David, and revolted from Reboam, to become the subjects of the king of Israel, must have been little better than schismatics, or idolators. Certainly no little toleration must have been admitted in Israel, when the queen Jezebel was allowed to raise an altar in its capital to Baal the god of the Tyrians, to surround it with delicious groves and gardens, and to establish her own prophets and her own priesthood in Samaria.

At this altar worshipped also Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. But when the young apostate Jewess, brought up in her mother's faith, became the wife of Joram, king of the orthodox Judah, and had the art, or persuasion, to pervert her husband (the seventh descendant from David), the hope of the Jewish hierarchy, the son of the most devoted of their flock (the pious Jehoshaphat),—the consequence was widely different. "Joram (says Josephus), not content with imitating the impiety of the kings of Israel, his predecessors, learnt from Athaliah, his wife, to pay to her strange gods sacrilegious adorations; and, though, owing to the promises made to David, God did not exterminate him and his race," no such promise protected Athaliah, or her father, (Israelites and apostates, like Joram). No vengeance, therefore was spared that could afflict and outrage the unfortunate Queen of Judah, until the extermination of her family, prophesied by Elijah the prophet, was fully and fearfully accomplished.

The agent of this dreadful prediction, the cruel and treacherous Jehu,* "slew all that remained of the house of Ahab, and all his great men, and all his kinsfolk, and his friends, and he left him none remaining—none in Israel!" One, however, there was in Judah, who had survived parents, brothers, son, friends, who knew that the dogs had eaten the flesh, and lapped the blood of her mother, in the streets of her own capital, and that the heads of her brothers ("of the king's sons") had been sent in baskets, by Jehu, to Jezreel, and that the perpetrator of these deeds of blood, the murderer of her family, (upheld by the powerful hierarchy of her own Jerusalem,) was seated on her father's throne.†

* 2 Kings, chap. ix. x.

† Jehu, after he had collected all the worshippers of Baal by a stratagem, murdered them in cold blood. The translator of Josephus, in the heads of his chapters of the ninth book, thus sums up the murders committed by Jehu, after his anointment:—"Jehu killed with his own hand Joram, king of Israel, and Ochosias (the Ahaziah of Scriptures), king of Judah (the brother and son of Athaliah), and put to death Jezebel, seventy sons of Ahab, all the relatives of this prince, forty-two relatives of Ochosias, nearly all the priests of Baal, the god of the Tyrians, to whom Ahab had raised a temple." "Jehu, however, permitted the Israelites to worship the gold calf; but, in consideration of his having

This remnant of a once numerous and powerful family, was Athaliah, Queen of Judah, the widowed and childless sovereign of Jerusalem, a woman of powerful passions and indomitable spirit, who, "when she saw that her son Ahaziah was dead, (murdered with the rest), arose and destroyed the seed royal," and "continued to reign over Judah"—to reign miserable and wicked, and wicked because she was miserable. But she reigned not long: the rescue of the infant Joas from the infuriated Athaliah by his aunt, the wife of the High Priest Jehoiada, still saved the race of David for the great destiny prepared for it. The infant Joas, consigned to the most secret recesses of the temple, concealed and educated among its impenetrable mysteries, was suddenly brought forth, when he had attained his eighth year; and, being surrounded by a military priesthood, and by the chiefs of a powerful conspiracy, was presented to the people as the sole remaining scion of the house of David, and as the legitimate king of Judah.*

Joas was crowned and anointed in the temple, amidst the shouts of "God save the king;" and these shouts brought Athaliah from her palace to the temple, by that royal way which the fated queen had still a right to pass. Her sudden apparition at the moment when the victim, who had escaped her power, was crowning in the midst of her own rebel subjects, in the midst of "priests and princes," and her piercing shriek of "Treason! treason!" are incidents of the highest dramatic order. The instant command of the High Priest (Jehoiada) for the death of the solitary and bereaved woman, who then presented herself boldly in the midst of her armed enemies, the order that the "captains of the hundreds, and the officers of the host should have her forth without the

punished the worshippers of Baal, God promised, by the mouth of the prophet, that his posterity should reign over Israel till the fourth generation."—Josephus, book ix.

* Joas, thirty years afterwards, stained the steps of the altar, at which he was consecrated, with the blood of Zachariah the High Priest, son and successor of Jehoiada. This sacrilege brought down the wrath of the Lord against the Jews; and it is traditionally assumed that, from that time, the responses of the Deity in the sanctuary were no longer heard.

ranges" (for the priest hath said, "let her not be slain in the house of the Lord") "and that he that followeth her should kill her with the sword,"—these, with her murder, which instantly followed, near the torrent of Cedron, are traits that render the story one of those grand tragedies of fact, which fiction but faintly imitates, and never surpasses.

Athaliah, immortalized by her high, though misdirected, energies (the source of all that is great in good or powerful in evil,) has furnished the most polished genius of modern ages with one of his finest subjects for dramatic representation. But the courtly poet has enfeebled all that was most forcible in the narrative; and pandering to the passions of the royal and orthodox audience for which he wrote, has turned the truth, the philosophy, and sublime scriptural poetry of Athaliah's eventful epopee into a medium of servile homage to the reigning powers of his own time, and to the pharisaical pride of his great patroness,* by whose order it was written.

* Madame de Sevigné (always right, because always true to nature), predicted that Athaliah would not maintain that eminence with posterity, which it had enjoyed in the court of Louis XIV. Time justified her prediction, which, however, was often disputed and denied. Racine, not satisfied with the *flagorneries* offered in his sacred drama of "Atalie," to princes and prelates, has in his preface drawn a parallel between the young king Joas, the descendant of David, and the young Duc de Maine, the child of a double adultery. "Je puis dire ici que la France voit en la personne d'un prince de huit ans et demi, qui fait aujourd'hui ses plus chères delices, un exemple illustre de ce que peut dans un enfant un heureux naturel, aidé d'une excellente éducation; et que, si j'avais donné au petit Joas la même vivacité, et le même discernement qui brillent dans les reparties de ce jeune prince, on m'aurait accusé avec raison d'avoir peché contre les règles de la vraisemblance."—*Preface d'Atalie.—Racine.*

Athaliah, though considered by many writers as the finest tragedy of the French theatre, and though Voltaire in a letter to Maffei said of it, "La France se glorifie d'Athalie; c'est le chef-d'œuvre de nôtre théâtre, et de nôtre poésie," was coldly received by the Parisian public, who designated it "un sujet de devotion propre à amuser les enfans." Three years after the death of Racine, and when Athalie was forgotten, Louis XIV., at the instigation of Madame de Maintenon, got it up at Versailles, when it was played by the princes, princesses, and ladies of the court. The Regent Orleans afterwards commanded the actors of the Français to perform it.

CHAPTER IV.

The Women of the Hebrews. Huldah. Judith. Under the Persian Captivity. Esther.

To the dark and direful, but grand character of Athaliah, succeeded the lives and deeds of better, and brighter women—of Huldah, the spiritual and the learned, of Judith, the brave and the devoted, of Esther, the wise and patriotic!

In the reign of Josiah, king of Judah, the king having flung down the idols which had long profaned the altars of the temple, a volume of great antiquity was discovered, in repairing that sacred edifice, so often sacrilegiously defaced. It had been buried under the rubbish of ages, and to the High Priest, Hilkiah, it was a sealed volume: its mysteries were beyond the powers of his elucidation.

It appears, indeed, that, among the learned and the holy, the priests and wise men of Jerusalem, there was not one who could expound the text, which excited alarm, as containing dreadful denunciations of God's wrath. The king then bethought him of a woman—of Huldah—the prophetess who "dwelt in Jerusalem, in the college:" the wife, says Josephus, of a man of great quality. He sent to her, because he feared that, to punish the crimes of the kings, his predecessors, and their transgressions of God's laws, he should be driven from his country, with all his people, to end miserably their days in a strange land. The prophetess told them that no prayers were efficient to obtain from God a revocation of his sentence; that the people would be driven from their country, because they had violated its laws without repentance, though they had so much time, and though the prophets had so plainly foretold what was to come.*

Consulted on the book by the king, Huldah ascribed it

* Josephus, book x, chap. x.

to Moses. It contained the books of the law, traced by the hand of the legislator of the people of God; and she expounded them, to the terror of the faithless and idolatrous generation, which Josias was endeavouring to bring back to the altar of their fathers. She announced all the evils which the wrath of the Lord could heap on the heads of his people; but she added that, since Josias had humbled himself before the Lord, those evils should not overtake the people over which he reigned, till after his death.

Josias fell gloriously in a national war, at the foot of Mount Carmel; and Jeremiah composed a funeral canticle in his praise. The predictions of Huldah, the prophetess, were fulfilled in after-times to the letter; and the confidence of the wise king of Judah in the power of woman's mind and forethought, was justified by the event.

Judith, whose agency in her country's cause has been the subject of much controversy, and whose life has been supposed by some of the learned to have been written by herself*—Judith, the deliverer of her nation, "seeing the evil that had come upon her people," starts forth in her patriot championship against their enemies, "to break down their stateliness by the hand of a woman." The rich, the young, the beautiful widow of Bethula is described as first conquering, by her charms and her wit, the formidable conqueror of the Jews, the general of Nebuchadnezzar, the greatest of the great captains of the warlike Assyria. If she followed up this moral sorcery by a deed of violence, and sealed her devotedness to the

* Scaliger and Grotius assert that the book of Judith is but a parable, composed in order to console the Jews at the time when Antiochus Epiphanes came into Judah. Although the authenticity of the book of Judith, has been much contested, the Council of Trent acknowledged it; and St. Jerome insisted that it had also been acknowledged by the Council of Nice. It was originally written in Hebrew, and was translated into Greek by the Septuagint. Some were of opinion that it was written by Judith herself; others that it was composed by the High Priest, who is mentioned in this book: but there is no proof of either. We have not even the original text, but a Latin version by St. Jerome only. This Father says in his preface that "he has given the sense without holding to the letter; and that he had extracted what he considered essential, from the repetitions and faulty variations in the different copies of it, and given it in his translation." Besides his version, there are two others, one in Greek, and one in Syriac, which contain circumstances that are not detailed by St. Jerome, and that appear to be what he mentions as having rejected.

holy cause of national emancipation by an act more heroic than womanly, it is some extenuation, that the high priest of Jerusalem consecrated that act by his gratitude and benediction. That Judith herself believed that the motive hallowed the deed, is testified in every inspired stanza of her own beautiful canticle.

Nebuchadnezzar having taken Jerusalem, razed its walls, pillaged its temples, and destroyed its priests, and having carried the Israelites into captivity, died a natural death, in the midst of his own great works at Babylon, which all profane writers cite as equalling those of Semiramis, as his labours were likened to those of Hercules. But his greatness died with him; and the conquest of Babylon, after his death, by Cyrus, threw the captive Israelites into the power of one of those great examples of wisdom, which are found brightening the darkest times, and anticipating the policy of the most enlightened. Seventy years after the tribes of Judah and Benjamin had been led captive into Babylon, Cyrus sent a mandate throughout Asia, declaratory of his intention of rebuilding the temple of Jerusalem, and restoring the captive Jews to the ruined capital of Solomon.* The chiefs of the tribes of Judah and of Benjamin, the high priests, or sacrificers, and the Levites, and all that imaged the once spiritual and powerful theocracy of the Hebrews, returned to Jerusalem.

Nothing was wanting to this solemn and magnanimous restoration by the "great king;" all the sacred vessels of the temple (carried off by Nebuchadnezzar from the temple) were restored. Offerings from all the tribute nations of Persia were brought to the great work of rebuilding the city of David. Mithridates, the great treasurer of Persia was sent with the treasures and consecrated utensils,† to assist Zerobabel, a Jewish prince, who was to

* Ezra.

† Josephus gives a curious inventory of this most magnificent vaisselle. In the representation made to Cambyses by the Samaritans and other nations against restoring the Jews to Jerusalem, they urged that the first political act of the Jews would be to become independent of himself, and to resist obedience to his government; "because the Israelites were always prompt to resist kingly power, from a peculiarity of temperament which led them ever to command, and never to obey."—*Josephus.* This is a curious admission from their own historian, of the poetical pertinacities of these conservative republicans.

lay the foundation of a temple, which was to rival that of Solomon.

The number of Jews who returned under the protection of Cyrus to Palestine, amounted to forty-two thousand four hundred and sixty persons. According to their own historians, Darius and Xerxes, the successors and descendants of Cyrus, seconded the great views of their great and wise progenitor; and, in spite of the opposition offered by the surrounding nations against the return of neighbours so restless and so dangerous, the protection afforded by the Persian monarchs to the scattered descendants of Abraham continued to the time of Artaxerxes.

Under his reign, a sanguinary persecution was undertaken: through the influence of Haman, the chief minister of the Persian government, the Israelites were accused of conspiracy and resistance to the laws throughout the provinces; and Artaxerxes issued a command for little less than the extermination of the entire people. It was then that a young woman, an orphan of the tribe of Benjamin, became the saviour of her people, the avenger of their wrongs, and the destroyer of one of the most powerful of their enemies: "for to Esther, under God," says Josephus, "we owe our salvation."

Esther, however, worked out the preservation and triumph of her people by far other and wiser means, than those resorted to by the brave and impetuous Judith; for if by her personal charms she captivated the senses of the mighty master of her nation's destiny, and laid the "sovereign of one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, from India to the Euphrates," at the feet of a proscribed captive, it was by her intellectual influence, and her adroit discretion, that she overpowered his volitions, frustrated his designs, and converted the intended exterminator of her people into their protector and friend.

Artaxerxes, King of Persia, the Ahasuerus of scriptural story, having given a royal feast in the capital of his empire to the representatives of many strange nations, his beautiful and beloved queen Vashti refused to attend, on the plea that the law of Persia forbade women to show themselves before strangers. Her disobedience became a subject of state inquiry; the seven magi, the interpreters of

the Persian laws, were summoned and their decisions taken. The queen was pronounced guilty of a greater crime than violating the laws of the land, of a violation of the law of nature, by the resistance of woman to the divine-righted power of man! "The Magi urged (says the Jewish historian) the danger of Vashti's example to the women of Persia, and the domestic insubordination and public evil it might produce."*

Vashti was, in consequence, repudiated; and the magi counselled the king to send forth emissaries through the Persian empire in search of youthful beauties, one of whom might be deemed worthy to take the high place vacated by the rebel queen. From among six hundred candidates (the assembled loveliness of the East), the king's preference fell on a young orphan, a Jewess, who had resided in great obscurity with her aged kinsman† in Babylon. The king, in taking to his arms and raising to his throne the beautiful and adroit Esther, knew not that the queen he had placed over his fire-worshipping subjects was of a sect merciless to all who were not of their own faith, a descendant of the royal house of Israel, whose people had been destined to extermination under his own despotic laws.

Esther was the agent chosen to accomplish the emancipation of her people; and her secret intelligence with her politic kinsman, Mordecai, her control over her own feelings, and the finesse and ability by which she consummated her vengeance, executed her high mission, and "covered her people with gladness, and with joy and honour," ("so that many of the nations of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews came upon them") prove that this Hebrew queen of Persia possessed all the qualities of a profound stateswoman,‡ and all the zeal of a devoted patriot.

* Josephus. † Esther, chap. i. verse 2, 3.

‡ It is in allusion to her quality of stateswoman, that Racine has chosen to represent the virtues and talents of another great stateswoman, the Esther of her day, under her character.

"O spectacle, O triomphe, admirable à mes yeux,
Digne effet du bras qui sauva nos ayeux!
Le fier Assuerus couronne sa captive,
Et le Persan superbe est aux pieds d'une Juive."

The "Persan superbe" who sat on the throne of France, when the

"Who would depise a nation which had amongst them such women?" asks the scriptural text; but who, in tracing the history of that nation, can deny that it was to "such women" under Heaven, as much as to its men, that it owed the conservation of that intellectual principle, of that moral force, which, at remote intervals, rescued the stiff-necked generations of Israel from the evils into which their fierce passions and unyielding self-sufficiency, that "hardness of heart," against which "the Lord testified, by all the prophets and by all the seers," continually plunged them.

But it was in vain that the sacred city of the Hebrews was rebuilt—that their glorious temple was re-edified—that their altars were again blazoned with the treasures of ages, and smoked with the offerings of tributary nations. It was in vain that the magnificent ceremonies of their picturesque and imposing ritual, as prescribed by Moses, were celebrated with a pomp and circumstance worthy of the reign of Solomon. It was in vain that their hereditary priesthood was called to preside at their altars, that their learned scribe and priest, Ezra, reassembled them at the gate of the Temple, and read to them their ancient laws, "the laws of Moses."* It was in vain that, revering their great antiquity, even Pagan potentates respected their religion and their laws, and that the most powerful kings of

tragedy was represented at Saint Cyr, is said to have bowed to this application. Racine always denied that there was a key to Esther; but says a writer of the times—"les gens les plus sages virent Louis XIV. dans Assuerus, Louvois dans Aman, Montespan dans Wasthi, et Maintenon dans Esther." Among the epigrams of the day, which this tragedy gave rise to, was the following:

"La persecution des juifs
De nos Hugonots fugitifs
Est une vive ressemblance,
Et l'Esther qui regne aujourd'hui,
Descend des rois, dont la puissance
Fut leur asile et leur appui.

"Mais pourquoi, comme Assuerus,
Notre roi comblé de vertus,
N'a-t-il point calmé sa colere?
Je vais vous le dire en deux mots;
Les juifs n'eurent jamais affaire
Aux Jesuites et aux Bigots."

* Nehemiah, chap. viii.

the earth restored them to the land of their promise and inheritance,* and to the unrestrained celebration of their religious ceremonies: a people are not to be saved from without. National greatness, like national liberty, is not extrinsic, nor accidental. It is the inherent spirit, the vital energy, (which give unity of purpose to a people), that can alone preserve them as a nation.

The Jews were hastening to the climax of their most awful and prophetic story, through moral debasement and political slavery; their long and successive captivities in Babylon and in Persia had enfeebled and degraded them; and their alliances with the daughters of a "strange god" had broken up that social union—the great secret of political concentration and national strength—so long preserved by their own women. They had lived too long in lands where women were slaves, and men polygamists, to respect the intellectual resources and moral influence of their own spiritual mothers and wives; and the last of their prophets, the last of the "messengers of the Lord of Hosts," (to use his own emphatic expression), closes the sacred volume of scriptural history, by denouncing their corruption and their crimes, and by attributing "the tribulation" which followed, to their violence, their injustice, and their faithlessness to their women.

"Judah hath dealt treacherously! and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem! for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord, which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god.

"The Lord will cut off the man that doeth this, the master, and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the Lord of Hosts;—

* Alexander showed the same predilection for the Jews, which the sovereigns of Persia had always testified. After his conquest of the Persian Empire, and while he was still enraged at the fidelity of this people to Darius, he marched against Jerusalem full of direful purpose. But the sacred and imposing procession which met him in the suburbs, appalled his imagination, and secured his protection. The priests, in their pontifical habits and white vestments, led by the grand sacrificer in an ephod of azure blue, enriched with gold, his head crowned with a tiara of pure gold, on which was written the name of God, went forth through an avenue strewed with flowers, and followed by the people. Alexander came forward to salute the high priest, and to adore the august name engraved on his tiara, &c.—*Josephus*, book xi. chap. 8.

"And this have ye done again; covering the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, nor receiveth it with good will at your hand.

"Yet ye say, wherefore? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously; yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.

"And did he not make (ye) one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit! And wherefore one? that he might seek a godly seed! therefore take heed of your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth."*

As Moses wound up his divine mission on Mount Horeb with his law on female inheritance, so closes the sacred volume of holy writ as it began—with woman,—her intellectual influence, and her social importance:—a glorious and imperishable record in her favour, to which nature and revelation have both set their seal; and which man, by all his physical supremacy, and by all his artificial combinations, his unjust laws, and puerile fictions, cannot cancel, or invalidate.

CHAPTER V.

The Women of the Hebrews. Under the Greek and Roman Dominion. The Women of the Asmonean Dynasty. The Alexandras.

FROM Cyrus to Artaxerxes, there had at various intervals been manifested, on the part of the Persian monarchs, a desire to restore the Israelites to their ancient land of promise; and in conformity to the advice of Cyrus, (found among his archives in the castle of Ecbatana in Media,) Darius had permitted the captive Jews to return to Palestine, under the conduct of their own hereditary sovereign, Zorobabel, King of Judah, of the race of David.† But if

* Malachi, chap. ii., verses 11, 12, 13, 14, 15.

† A question being proposed by Darius to his Magi and other Persian and Median sages, namely, which power was strongest, that of kings, wine, women, or truth, the courtly philosophers gave their answer in

the Jews were not slow to avail themselves of their emancipation, still of the multitudes which marched out of the gates of Babylon, "to the music of lutes and cymbals," a considerable number returned to the Persian capital,* leaving but a portion of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin to proceed to the desolated city of David. In the succeeding reign, Ezra, the most considerable of the sacrificers, who, with the high priest Joachim, had remained in Babylon, accompanied a fresh reinforcement of Israelites to people the deserted streets, and re-edify the crumbled walls of Jerusalem. The influence of Esther with Artaxerxes completed the restoration of the two tribes to the land of their inheritance: the other ten remained beyond the Euphrates.

In these several journeys from all parts of Persia to Jerusalem, the women abandoned the homes of their habitual affections, in numbers disproportionate to those of the men,† many of whom, and particularly the Levites, were accompanied by "strange women," in violation of the law, notwithstanding that it had so often brought down the reproofs of their prophets‡ and leaders. From this offence, even the priesthood was not exempt.

Energized and kept together by the zeal and eloquence of Zorobabel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zachariah, the Jews, after much opposition on the part of all the neighbouring states, rebuilt the walls of their ancient city and their august temple;§ and they once again solemnized their religious festivals, and offered their "Holocaust according to the law:" "the grand sacrificers, the Levites, and the rest of the people, made an offering to the Lord for the sins of the tribes, one hundred bulls, two hundred sheep, four hundred lambs, and twelve goats."

Thus released from captivity by those who had led them captive, and restored to the land of their fathers, in spite

favour of the two former: Zorobabel, who was also questioned, decided for women and truth, and justified his answer with such logic and eloquence, that Darius took him into special favour, and permitted his return to Palestine at the head of his people.—*Josephus*, book xi. chap. iv.

* Josephus, book xi. chap. iv.

† Josephus says they amounted, with their children, to forty thousand.

‡ Ezra, chap. i.

§ Ibid. v. vi. Josephus, book iv. Ezra, chap. iv.

of the remonstrances of their "adversaries,"—thus left unrestrained, by the tolerant worshippers of the sun, to the free exercise of their own ancient religion, the sacerdotal order of Israel proceeded to establish a government, which their own historian denominates an "aristocratic theocracy." The grand sacrificer, or high priest, assumed for himself, as prince and pontiff, the sovereign authority; and, while he adopted the pontifical ephod, he bound his brow with the sacred tiara, irradiated with the graven name of God. Appointing "porters, singers, and Levites for the service of the temple," he restored to their fullest splendour those magnificent ceremonies and solemn rites, to which the pagan kings of the earth bowed in reverential wonder:*—rites and ceremonies preserved to the present day, under various modifications, throughout the Christian world, from Rome to Canterbury, from the gorgeous shrines of the Greek church in St. Petersburg, to the rude altar of the humble mass-house, in Catholic Ireland!

Under the theo-republican form of government of ancient Israel, (from Moses to the last of the Judges, a period of five hundred years) the people had shown frequent resistance to the power of the priesthood; their monarchy, also, which existed five hundred and thirty-two years, from Saul to the captivity, had been frequently disturbed by the popular jealousy against priestly interference in temporal affairs: and now, when a theocratic government was thus set up on the return from the Persian captivity, a similar jealousy appears to have excited, from the first, a similar hostility on the part of the laity of all classes.

Even the chiefs of the tribes, joined by "Noadiah the prophetess," (one of those patriot female seers, who struggled to the last in behalf of the independence of the people), continued to resist the power of the theocracy; and a "secret intelligence was established between the enemies," (as the neighbouring hostile states were called) and the nobles of Judah, to oppose the priesthood.

Nehemiah,† also, and Ezra denounced the Levites for violating the law of Moses, and returning from Persia with

* Nehemiah, chap. vi. † Ibid. chap. xiii. Josephus, vol. ii.

"outlandish women." "Remember them, O my God!" is the fine and indignant ejaculation of Nehemiah, "remember them, because they have defiled the priesthood, the covenant of the priesthood, and the Levites."

When the dynasty of the Asmoneans, or royal line of David, had ultimately succeeded in re-establishing the monarchy of Judah in its temporal forms and succession, the priesthood was still the *imperium in imperio;* and the intrigues of the pontiffs with their foreign masters (whether Persian, Greek, or Egyptian) were pursued through every phasis of treachery and corruption. Under the Greek dominion, persons without zeal, or religion, or love of country, aspired to the pontificate, through the influence of the men in power at the courts of their foreign rulers.

To the ministers of the supreme government their eyes were still constantly turned; their object was power over the people, and wealth for themselves, to be enjoyed in their sumptuous dwellings "in the temple." They forgot that the influence of their order in the olden times was founded in the belief of its superior virtues, its exclusive knowledge, and direct communion with Heaven itself. They forgot that Moses, their great reformer and legislator, was not their pontiff, and that Aaron, who *was*, exercised no temporal authority: they forgot that Joshua and Jephthah, and Sampson, who were judges, and great captains, and political rulers, were not priests, and that Eli and Samuel, by attempting to establish an absolute theocracy in their own persons and families, and to unite the temporal with the spiritual sway, had roused the suspicions of the progressing people, and paved the way to that revolution, which established an irresponsible monarchy over the commonwealth of Israel, ending in the separation of its tribes and their eventual captivity.

Under Alexander of Macedon,* the priesthood appears to have reached the acmé of sordid corruption and political intrigue; and the sanguinary contest of two ambitious brothers† for the pontificate, sprinkled the holy of holies with human blood, and desecrated the temple of

* Three hundred and fifty years before Christ.
† Ezra, Nehemiah, and Josephus, are the authorities.

Jehovah by the crime of fratricide.* The internal government of Israel, under the supremacy of the Ptolemies, was rather an anarchy than a monarchy, or theocracy. The intrigues of the pontifical families† with the Asiatic kings, and the dire and deadly warfare of Antiochus, were only relieved for an interval by the transient illustration of Judas Maccabeus.‡

The scion of a sacerdotal family, but ennobled by personal qualities beyond all distinctions of caste or race, Judas Maccabeus was one of the last and greatest patriots of Judea: he fought her battles, he revived her ancient nationality, he released her from servitude, and, rescuing her from the tyranny of Antiochus, placed her under the protection of the Roman senate. He lived to be raised to the pontifical sovereignty by the gratitude of the people; and he died gloriously in their cause, fighting for their independence!

To this purest of their pontiffs and bravest of their warriors, succeeded the restoration of the Asmonean dynasty, the royal race of Judah, who united in their persons the titles of King of Judah and grand sacrificer. Acting, however, by the will of other great "pontiffs," they continued to reign and to serve—despots in their domestic government, and slaves to the Roman power. The successive Alexanders and Aristobuluses of this declining family, exhibited in their respective reigns all the corruption and feebleness incident to a proconsular government, and all the refined cruelty inherent (in all ages and circumstances) in the Asiatic temperament. Still, throughout this moral disorganization, amidst all the crimes and

* The reigning pontiff, John, was assassinated by the rival candidate for the tiara (his own brother Jesus) in the temple of Jerusalem, Jesus having been protected and promised that high dignity by the powerful Bagosa, the general of the Persian army under Artaxerxes. This sacrilege (says Josephus) was the cause that the Jews immediately after lost their liberty, and that their temple was profaned.

† The pontifical family of Onias recalls the nepotism and corruption of the worst times of the papal power of Rome. The atrocities of the priesthood had become so odious, that under Antiochus an immense number of the Jews renounced their religion; and the Samaritans wholly separated themselves from Israel, and consecrated their ancient temple at Garisim to the Grecian Jupiter.—*Josephus.*

‡ Maccabees, 1, 8, 9.

corruption, which filled up this most momentous epoch in the history of the Jews, and of mankind, some light, (faint, indeed, and unequal in its flashes, like the flashing of the lightning over the lurid masses of the thickening hurricane,) occasionally brightened the darkness of the Jewish story. That light, as of old in Israel, came from woman's mind.

A century before the birth of Christ, the women of the Asmonean dynasty, as queens and stateswomen, but above all as royal mothers, (that awful position in Oriental despotisms) appeared on the arena of public life, with great intellectual power, if not with the milder virtues of woman's happiest condition. The Alexandras (a name which for a time was indicative of the same political and social importance in Judah, as that of Cleopatra in Egypt,) were placed in a position that called out all the strong volition and intellectual contrivance, of which the moral idiosyncrasy of woman is susceptible.

The social condition of the Hebrew women at this period remained what the reforms of Moses had left it, when he reduced polygamy to four lawful wives, (and an indefinite number of concubines.)* Incompatible as these reforms may be with Christian morals, and with modern European institutions, they were still advantageously distinguished from the laws of all other Oriental nations, and even from those of Israel, in its more primitive times. But the Hebrew women had too many traditions of the state of female society in Persia, and were in too close relation with Egypt, not to have borrowed much from both, in opinion, customs, and in self-dependence;† and the queens of the Asmonean

* Michaelis. "Polygamy amongst the Jews was through the influence of Rabbi Gierson (A. D 1060) formally prohibited under the penalty of excommunication, or *cherem*, by a synod held at Worms; but the effects of this prohibition were to last only till 1340, after which time a person married to more than one wife was not to be considered as falling under the penalty. In many countries this prohibition was not adopted by the Jews—for instance, by those that lived in Provence. The abolition of polygamy was not made on religious grounds, but only as a matter of expediency; many later Jewish synods have, however, forced such individuals as had married several wives to divorce them all except the first." —See an admirable article on the State of the Jews in Poland, in the British and Foreign Review, Number X. October, 1837.

† Segur, vol. 1, page 165.

dynasty, during the century which preceded the birth of Christ, appeared not only to have displayed considerable moral energy, but to have taken up a position, and to have assumed an influence with their royal masters, or husbands, which assimilated their condition to that of the royal women of both these countries.

A century before the Christian era, the mother of Aristobulus, the then reigning king and pontiff of Judea, aware of the inherent vices of her unnatural son, put forth her own pretensions to the throne, and endeavoured to prove that the sovereignty of Palestine was her right. Whether she was just or otherwise, whether sympathy for the suffering people, or a personal ambition, urged this aspiration of the queen-mother, she must have been considered by her son as too dangerous a rival to be permitted to live. Accordingly, the ferocious Aristobulus condemned her to the slow torture of dying of hunger in a loathsome dungeon!

As an expiation of this crime, against which nature cried aloud, he endeavoured to bring into the pale of orthodoxy the Iturians, whom he converted, by fire and sword, to the Jewish faith. But the murder of his brother Antigone soon followed that of his mother: and this fearful king of the Jews, and grand pontiff, having lived abhorred, died suddenly in agonies of mind and body, bequeathing to Salome, whom the Greeks called Alexandra, his wife, a power in the state, which she had already secured as the chief of an influential cabal. She had already brought the nobles of Judea, and the courtiers of the palace of Jerusalem, to her interests; and she proved at once the purity of her intentions, and the greatness of her influence in the state, by immediately liberating her husband's imprisoned brothers, and placing the elder (Alexander-Janneus) on the throne and in the pontificate of Judea.

But she who gave power, could not give wisdom to render it available. Alexander-Janneus soon proved how unworthy he was of the protection of his disinterested sister-in-law, by the commission of every crime that degrades and afflicts humanity.

His first act on his assumption of royal power, was to

put his second brother to death, on a suspicion of conspiracy against the throne; his next ferocious deed was to crucify eight hundred of his subjects, before the eyes of their wives, on the plea of a revolt! During his mad wars with the Arabs and Moabites, he lost nearly the whole of his army in an ambuscade; and in an engagement with Ptolemy Lathyrus, King of Egypt, he was wholly defeated. The frequent insurrections of his subjects induced him at last to ask them "what he could do to satisfy them?" They replied with acclamations "*Die!*" He soon accomplished their wishes; for, in the midst of his crimes, his wars, and his defeats, while besieging the castle of Ragaba "beyond the Jordan," he was struck down by a mortal disease, at the moment when he was celebrating one of his dissolute orgies, in a royal tent, filled with his concubines and parasites.

It was then that the talents and virtues of his wife Salome, the second Alexandra, who had accompanied him in his campaigns, were first exerted in behalf of the public good. Alarmed by the distracted condition of the state, and the perilous position of her children and herself, Alexandra rushed, like Bathsheba, to the couch of the dying king of Judea. Eloquently describing to him the public disasters, the perils, that surrounded his two sons, Hiram and Aristobulus, and the hatred that the people bore to his race, on account of the crimes of its late representatives, she besought him to announce his will, and to name a successor, and a regent for that successor, such as would best suit the exigencies of the times. He thought of her wisdom and her virtues, he was aware of her popularity with all classes, and, above all, with the Pharisees, that powerful faction, whose influence he advised her to cultivate; and, dying, he named her his successor to the throne.

Alexandra, whose sons were under age, was left by the will of her husband sole sovereign; and, being upheld by the most powerful party in the state, she placed herself at the head of the armies, prosecuted the siege with vigour, and carried it with such brilliant success, that, on her return to Jerusalem, she had not only a triumphal entry for herself, but obtained for her husband the honours of superb

funeral obsequies. Severe to the enemies of the people, she drove into exile, or executed (according to the wishes of the people) those of the ministers and minions of Alexander-Janneus, who were considered as the cause of his errors and his crimes; she released all prisoners of state who had suffered in the popular cause, recalled many banished patriots, enrolled a number of foreign troops in her demoralized army, and kept the neighbouring princes in such fear of her policy and her power, that she was enabled to obtain hostages for their fealty and alliance.

Well studied in the character of her two sons, Aristobulus and Hiram, and knowing the temperaments they had inherited from their father, (for they shared between them his mental incapacity and violent passions,) she assigned the pontificate to Hiram, (the eldest and most incapable), on whose blind submission to her own powerful party, the Pharisees, she counted; while she left the brave and aspiring, but reckless and incompetent Aristobulus without power, or means to disturb that national repose and salutary peace, which it was her wise policy and good fortune to preserve, during the entire of her prosperous and tranquil reign.

To the last, her wisdom and discretion served the country over which she reigned; and when Tigranes, king of Armenia, had marched upon Syria, with the intention of proceeding to conquer Judea, Alexandra avoided the imminent danger, by timely concessions of the belligerent king, by offerings and presents to the sordid man, of such value, that Tigranes expressed to her ambassadors the high estimation in which he held her great qualities, and the sense he felt for her noble liberality: accordingly, he slackened his march, and changed his purposes.

Alexandra, the last sovereign queen of Judea, died in her seventy-third year, revered by her subjects, respected by her allies, and feared by her enemies. This princess (says her historian) had nothing of the weakness of her sex; her actions proved her capacity to govern, and were even finely contrasted to the crimes and incapacity of cotemporary princes. She attached herself to practical utility, preferring the present benefit of the people to the indulgence of vain theories for the future. She believed

that moderation is the secret of good government, and that truth and justice should be the rule of action in a state. Still these great qualities did not prevent her from forfeiting many of the advantages, (which her high ambition and perilous labours had obtained for her,) by adopting a party in preference to the entire people, and following the pernicious councils of the Pharisees, the enemies of her house. Although her reign passed in peace, her death was the signal of trouble and misfortune to her people.*

The sanguinary and unbrotherly contests, the feebleness and indiscretions of the two sons of Alexandra, Hiram the pontiff, and the Prince Aristobulus, who on the death of their mother desolated Palestine with civil wars, justified her opinion of their incapacity to reign. By their intrigues with Asiatic princes, and, above all, with Pompey, Cæsar, and Mark Antony, they plunged their country, for a series of years, in factious insurrection, and finally threw it under the feet of Rome; destroying for ever that last fragment of political independence, which the tribes of Israel had brought with them from the desert and the wilderness.

Wearied by the respective applications of the rival brothers, disgusted with the feebleness of the High Priest Hiram, and indignant at the treachery of the nominal king Aristobulus, Pompey abandoned both, besieged Jerusalem, and took and plundered its august temple (which the Jewish troops had occupied as a fortress). Carrying the Prince Aristobulus, his wife, and two sons, captives to Rome (where the eldest Alexander, the husband of the daughter of his uncle Hiram, without any obvious purpose, was shortly after beheaded), he left the feeble pontiff Hiram under the protection of Antipater, (the governor for the Romans of Palestine) to lead a stealthy and obscure life—the shadow of a shade of the princely pontificate of Israel.

But, while the men of this ancient dynasty, the sons and grandsons of the wise Alexandra, were thus scattered and broken down, terminating their eventful lives in igno-

* Josephus, book xiii. chap. 24.

minious death, or surviving the honours of their ancient race in inglorious captivity, there was still remaining one great scion of the stem of the Asmoneans—one daughter of the house of David—worthy of her illustrious descent, a fit representative of her whose name she bore, whose spirit she inherited, and whose genius she surpassed! This was another Alexandra, the only child of Hiram, the sovereign pontiff, who, having been early married to her cousin Alexander, the son of Aristobulus, saw her youthful husband dragged a prisoner to Rome, and heard of his ignominious death, at the moment when she was giving birth to Aristobulus, the last lineal king of Judea, and inheritor of the pontificate of Jerusalem.

Alexandra was a true Hebrew woman of the old caste, of a quenchless spirit, of a fervid imagination, and an imperturbable mind. Ambitious, and full of deviceful stratagem, where the rights of her family, her country, or her religion, were at stake; capable of any enterprise for their preservation, and resolutely bent on upholding to the last that great system which had hitherto governed the many by the superior wisdom of the few, she gave all her energies and talents to support the hereditary hierarchy of Israel, then vested in the person of her aged father, and destined to be the inheritance of her infant and fatherless son, whose beauty was said "to approach to that of Divinity itself." The oppressed Jews fixed their hopes on this mother of the last of their kings. Alexandra was a great link in the chain of their association, and the holy fabric, which Miriam assisted Moses to raise in the Desert, was still watched over by this true daughter of Levi, with the spiritual devotedness of a consecrated priestess, and the pertinacious energy of a fond and an ambitious mother.

While the men of her family groaned in captivity, and submitted to degradation in a humiliating exile, the daughter of the sovereign pontiff, bereaved of all but her own brave spirit, and her woman's intensity of purpose, clung to the ruins of her father's deserted altars. Whether the temple of Jehovah resounded with hosannas, and breathed the incense of frankincense and myrrh, or echoed to the frightful crash of arms, and was stained with the hot

blood of the wounded and the dying, still, there she was, courageously braving all danger, true to her family, her religion, and her country.

But not alone did she encounter the curses of the vengeance-breathing Jews, or the fury of the barbarous Roman soldiery—her two children were still beside her. Those children (whose angelic beauty was well adapted to the holy sanctuary, in which they had been reared and sheltered), shared her dangers and imbibed her spirit. The younger Aristobulus, like Samuel, was already serving the altars of the temple in the infant priesthood, the future sovereign pontiff of Judea; and Mariamne, her immortal daughter, the impersonation of all that was lovely, and wise, and brave-spirited, in the women of her race, was, with her brother, at her mother's side, who in the midst of all her desolation, was blessed in their possession. The struggles of Alexandra to preserve these blessings, and to rescue and restore the rights of her children formed the great epic of her life.

But, illustrious as was the character of this greatly endowed woman, noble as was the object to which she directed all her great moral powers, she had to contend with a force greater than any which she possessed, the sovereign will and physical superiority of her master man. In an epoch when physical force was every where reassuming its ascendancy, she had to contend, on all sides, with those selfish passions, and to grapple with that reckless ambition, which ultimately resolved society into its first elements, consummating the ruin of all that was known of liberty, and preparing the entire world for the degradation of mind, and the overthrow of civilisation.

But still she did contend; and though she fell in the contest, though her nature became perverted under the force of evil circumstances, she represented in the tragic action of her life, the pertinacity of spirit, and the sublime indestructibility of the maternal instinct, beyond the reach of all external forces to paralyse or extinguish.

The dynasty of the Asmoneans was rapidly disappearing. Aristobulus was put to death by the partisans of Pompey. His sole surviving son, Antigone, was a fugitive suppliant at the Asiatic courts, seeking aid for the recovery of his

rights, and destined to perish in the attempt. Hiram, the venerable pontiff, on the death of Pompey, had been taken under the protection of Cæsar, and again presided at the altars of his fathers; and his wise, wary, and superintelligent daughter, Alexandra, the moving spring of all, watched over the safety of her father, her children, her country and her religion, as the last vestal priestess of a ruined temple feeds the extinguishing light which flickers on its desecrated altar.

Cæsar, moved by the representations of an embassy from Jerusalem, (suspected to have been organized by Alexandra, whose feeble and indolent father was incapable of exertion) ordered the senate to receive into the alliance and friendship of the Roman people, the Jews and their sovereign pontiff. He also commanded Antipater, his governor in Palestine, to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, which Pompey had thrown down; and he enabled Hiram to re-edify the holy sanctuary which Cassius had pillaged! It was further commanded by "Cæsar, emperor, dictator, and Pontifex Maximus of Rome," "that the descendants of Hiram should be princes and pontiffs of Judea, in perpetuity, and should exercise the office of grand sacrificers, according to the laws and customs of their nation. Even Athens, republican Athens, came forward at this epoch, to confer on the representative of the kings of Israel a crown of gold, while it awarded him a statue of bronze, to be placed in the temple of the graces."

But, amidst all these honours, by which Rome and Greece marked their respect for one of the oldest, though the smallest nation of the earth, Alexandra saw that the power of her father was a shadow, and the destiny of her children full of peril and darkness,—that Judea approached "her desolation," and that other temples would soon arise, to efface that to which her fathers had brought the ark from the wilderness. She saw that the glory of her race had reached its solstice, that a new power was growing up in Jerusalem; and she fixed her prophetic eye on Herod, the youngest son of Antipater (the governor of Jerusalem), though then only known by his great qualities and brilliant courage. Herod, the champion of Palestine, the

friend of her father Hiram, the favourite of Cassius, the protected of Antony, was the idol of the people of Jerusalem; for he had won their gratitude by his destruction of a powerful band of robbers, who had long preyed on their property, and devastated their lands.

The death of Antipater (poisoned by a Jew, the suspected partisan of Hiram's house,) only served to raise Herod to the government of Jerusalem, at the moment when Antigone, the son of Aristobulus, and nephew of Hiram, had assembled a powerful army before its walls. Herod defended the city, pursued and defeated Antigone, and returned victorious to Jerusalem, to be honoured with a triumphal entry, and to be crowned by the people. The sovereign-pontiff, too, surrounded by his family, received him with open arms, and demanded "what recompense the victor would accept, for saving the holy city, and its august temple." Herod, in the flush of his triumph, turned his eyes on the daughter of Alexandra, who was present, and pronounced the name of "Mariamne." Hiram, weak and impotent, plighted his young and beautiful descendant to the protector of his rights, and the future extirpator of his race.

A second siege of Jerusalem by Antigone and the Parthian army, and the capture of Hiram, by Bazapharnes, followed. Herod, by a timely retreat, saved himself, with the principal forces of Jerusalem, only to re-enter her gates, again triumphant. He had been received at Rome as a friend and ally; and, joined by a Roman force, he fought his way back to Judea, step by step, took Antigone prisoner, sent him to Mark Antony, besieged and took Jerusalem by storm, and ransomed the "Holy City" from pillage by the Roman soldiers, with all he possessed, or could command. Protecting the family of the grand pontiff, Hiram, he wooed, won, and, during the siege, wedded the betrothed Mariamne.*

Cassius and Mark Antony had promised Herod that they would establish him "king of Judea." The Roman senate had proclaimed him "king of the Jews;" but it was his own valour and fortunes that accomplished these golden

* Josephus, book xiv.

promises, and won for him the epithet of "Great," so often lavished on the wickedest and the worst. His union with Mariamne, (the daughter of Alexandra, and the sister of the young Aristobulus, the lineal chief of his royal house, and nephew of the Antigone, who had been put to death at Rome, on Herod's suggestion,) seemed to confirm his own title to the throne, and to consummate his happiness and his glory: but this unnatural union became the bane of both;—and the outraged affections of two helpless and oppressed women eventually avenged the wrongs of their race and nation, with their own.

The venerable Hiram was released from his captivity in Babylon, and brought to Jerusalem, by Herod, "who called him father," and accorded him all honours, save those of his rights as a king, and of his holy office as a pontiff. Mariamne sat on the throne, where her family had reigned during one hundred and fifty years, and became the ruling destiny of its usurper, his idol, and his victim. The young Aristobulus, the hereditary grand sacrificer, was already a consecrated minister of the tabernacle, the hope of his nation, the dread of his tyrant brother-in-law. Alexandra, the mother! she too, was grandly and gorgeously lodged, favoured, and caressed,—but not deceived. She held her sleepless watch between the royal palace of Jerusalem and its august temple; and hovered over her children, like the mother eagle, who beholds her young brood, the destined prey of some ferocious power, greater than her own. To the physical force of man, this devoted mother had only to oppose the moral subtlety of woman.

From the moment when Mariamne had established her infatuating influence over the heart and actions of Herod, the palace of Jerusalem had become a theatre, on whose blood-stained stage the direst and most stirring tragedy was enacted, that the life of woman ever furnished. Herod the Great, whom Rome respected, and the world feared, with all his fierce passions and unlimited power over the happiness and lives of thousands, was still under the spell of woman's spirit. Distracted by his love for Mariamne, by his distrust of her mother, and by a blind confidence in his bold, bad, but able minister, the Princess

Salome, his sister, his heart was rent by the fiercest passions, and his court stained by the foulest crimes.

Sharing his genius and his fortunes, Salome envied and hated the Jewish princess, whom she resolved to ruin. Alexandra, indomitable in pride and passion, despised, rather than feared, the upstart Salome; and Mariamne (the sublime and beautiful Mariamne), energized by the loftiest spirit, which never for a moment quailed, neither sought to win the sister, nor affected to return the brother's passion.

Mariamne, placed by her beauty and her virtue in that singular and awful position, which, (while it exposed her to the passionate love of the master of her destiny, inspired her with an uncontrollable aversion for his deeds and person) has furnished the historian of her nation with some of his most interesting pages; while, to the dramatic incidents of her innocent and awful life, one of the greatest and most versatile geniuses of the last century stands indebted for the most beautiful and affecting of his tragedies.* But the true Protagonist of this great historical drama, to which all the passions lent their force, and in which every variety of human suffering was enacted, was Alexandra—the representative of Esther, and of Athaliah—the dethroned queen—the devoted daughter—the bereaved mother—the martyred patriot—and the last of those Hebrew women, who, in the land of their fathers, were called on to display the spirit, the faith, the genius, and the virtues, of their female ancestors, for the admiration of posterity.

Hiram was but a prisoner at large. Mariamne, alternately the object of the love, the hate, the confidence, and the jealousy of Herod, was at once his wife and slave, his idol and victim. The young Aristobulus had already assumed the azure ephod, and bound his youthful brow with the consecrated diadem; and Alexandra awaited only the arrival of the great annual festival, to present the last royal and pontifical scion of the tribe of Levi to the sons of Israel.

When, therefore, an obscure sacrificer, brought from

* The tragedy of Mariamne, by Voltaire. It would seem that woman is the natural subject of tragedy, in all ages.

Babylon by Herod, named Ananel, and the most unworthy of the priesthood, appeared before the tabernacle, in the pontifical robes, the people turned away, humbled and disgusted by this act of lawless and sacrilegious power. Alexandra, too, turned away; but not humbled: she was infuriated! She saw her last hope quenched—and yet she did not despair. From man, his justice or compassion, she had now, indeed, nothing to expect; but in this her direst exigency, she turned her eyes to Egypt, where woman was still powerful—to that land where the divine truth was still, as of old, imaged in a female form—where still stood the mystic Isis, with her sublime epigraph, "I am what has been! what is—what will be—and no mortal hath lifted my veil!"

To this divine dogma, the apostle of a pure theism now turned with sanguine confidence, and invoked the aid of the votarist of Isis, on behalf of the worshippers of Jehovah. The Jewish princess addressed herself to the Egyptian queen.

Cleopatra, "that rare Egyptian, the serpent of old Nile," was in the zenith of her power, of her genius, and her charms, at the moment when Alexandra thus appealed to her womanly sympathies and queenly sisterhood, by secretly forwarding to her a letter by a musician, a confidential domestic of her own household. At the same time, her deviceful mind won over to her interests Gellius (then in Jerusalem), who was so struck with the extraordinary beauty of Mariamne, and of the young pontiff, Aristobulus, that he took charge of their portraits, and carried them to Mark Antony—assailing the passions as well as the pity of his master, by observing that the children of Alexandra resembled deities, rather than any "mortal mixture of earth's mould."

It is thought that Gellius hoped to inspire the voluptuous slave of Cleopatra with a passion for the wife of Herod. But either Cleopatra was still too powerful, or Antony had still too much respect for public opinion, to carry off the wife of his friend and ally, even under the pretext of humanity or justice. Listening, therefore, to the suggestions of Cleopatra alone, Antony limited his interference with Herod, on behalf of the family of Alexandra, to request-

ing him to remove so dangerous a rival to his power as Aristobulus, and to send him to Egypt. Every honest assurance, on the part of Cleopatra and himself, was at the same time given, that the young prince should be protected and honourably provided for.

Herod saw the danger of placing the legitimate king of the Jews, (the last of his line), under the protection of Cleopatra, whose views on Judea had been long suspected. To prevent the son of Alexandra from ever leaving Jerusalem, he, therefore, removed his own high priest, Ananel, and installed Aristobulus into the holy office of sovereign pontiff. He even affected to restore him to the altars of his fathers with an unusual solemnity, and pomp of circumstance. But, ere he had done so, he assembled the chiefs of the people, and his own friends; and, citing Alexandra to appear before this high tribunal, charged her with disturbing the public peace, by intrigues with the wily queen of Egypt. The intention of this conspiracy, he said, was to wrest the crown from his own head, and to place it on that of her son; "although (he added) he had won that crown, by toils and dangers, which had saved Judea and the Jews from destruction;—had won it only to share its grandeur with Alexandra's own daughter, Mariamne." For Mariamne's sake, however, he declared that he forgave the treason; and he again took the fair traitress, her mother, to his affections, while he restored to her son the high office of grand pontiff.

Alexandra listened and wept, or seemed to weep, in joy and gratitude, while she denied the treason ascribed to her with indignation. With eloquent sincerity, she confessed, indeed, that her religion and her duty to her family had urged her to attempt every means to rescue the pontificate from unworthy hands, and to restore the holy office of grand sacrificer to her son, the rightful inheritor of its sacred duties.

Herod embraced his mother-in-law, and affected to believe her defence; but a specious reconciliation, based on a mutual distrust, was the only consequence. Alexandra was restored to her palace in royal state; but she soon discovered that that palace was merely a splendid prison. She was surrounded by spies, forbade ever again to meddle

with public affairs, and placed under the strict surveillance of Salome, the sister of Herod, whose mind was scarcely less powerful, or astute, than her own. Alexandra saw the danger of her position, and the hollowness of the protection offered to her son by the usurper of his crown; and again she applied to her truest friend and natural ally, the Queen of Egypt, for aid and counsel. Cleopatra, in answer, suggested that there was no safety for herself, or for Aristobulus, save in flight; and that nothing could be done for them and their cause, until they were both under her immediate protection, in Egypt.

The example of Cleopatra, as well as her advice, was adopted by Alexandra. The stratagem by which the Egyptian queen had once effected her own escape from the enemies of her crown and life, to the camp of Cæsar, was imitated by Alexandra. She had two coffers constructed, one to inclose her son, another for herself; a vessel was prepared by her secret agents to embark these cases for Egypt at midnight, and the conduct of the enterprise was committed to Esop, the most faithful and ingenious of her servants.

When all was ready, the lids were closed on the precious deposits, and the coffers, borne on men's shoulders, passed uninterruptedly the gates of her palace. There, however, they were stopped and opened, by order of Herod, and the unfortunate Alexandra and her son arrested: for Salome, in her ceaseless vigilance, had discovered all. Herod, affecting only to be amused by the ingenious stratagem, again forgave and embraced his mother-in-law; and seemed rather to despise, than to fear, the schemes of persons so impotent and so enthralled.

Shortly after, Herod resolved on celebrating the Jewish feast of tabernacles in public, with the people of all sects and classes. The gorgeous spirit of Solomon seemed revived. The temple of Jerusalem shone forth in its original glory; the young grand sacrificer, Aristobulus, appeared before its altars, habited in the costly and picturesque splendour of his holy vocation, "to offer sacrifices to God, with the ceremonies ordained by the law."

Aristobulus was but seventeen; but his stature (like Saul's, at the same age,) surpassed that of other men;

and his extraordinary beauty shone out so brightly, with the majesty of air peculiar to his race,* that the eyes of the multitude, were fixed on him, with an affection and admiration, approaching to religious awe. The national *prestige* in favour of his family, the remembrance of the wrongs and valour of his grandfather, Aristobulus, and of his father, Alexander, (both victims to domestic intrigue and Roman power,) and, above all, the recollection of the wise and prosperous reign of his great-grandmother, Alexandra, with the presence of his beautiful and high-spirited sister, and of his august and devoted mother, gave to the acclamations of the Jews a frenzy of enthusiasm, which Herod, the destroyer of that beloved race, the usurper of those honours, could not misunderstand. The feast of tabernacles, however, passed away triumphantly for the young pontiff; and Alexandra was permitted to follow it up by giving a royal fête at her villa at Jericho, to which Herod accepted an invitation.

The pleasure of the day, and the magnificence of the scene, recalled the tradition of "the palace of the forest of cedars," in the great days of Jerusalem. Herod entered into all the revels of the young and the pleasure-seeking; and when the increasing heats of the noontide hour dispersed the guests amid the umbrageous groves fringing the lakes and ponds of a site of oriental loveliness, the king, accompanied by Aristobulus, and some of the royal suite, sought the shades on the water edge. Some threw themselves under the trees; others, in frolic sport, plunged into the deep waters of the lakes: Aristobulus was among the latter; but he alone sunk, to rise no more with life.

At the sight of his dead body, the grief of Alexandra and Mariamne amounted to the wildest frenzy; they suspected with reason, and they denounced with imprudence. When the death of Aristobulus was known, the city of Jerusalem was plunged in such deep grief, that every family gave to this public loss the sorrows of a private misfortune. Herod, also, wept the death of his young brother-in-law, the Lord's anointed; and Alexandra, after a frustrated attempt to destroy herself, suddenly recovered

* Josephus, book xv. chap. iii.

her resignation, and seemed to believe in the sincerity of the king's regrets. These were demonstrated by all the marks of affection and respect that could be given in honour of the dead; the funeral obsequies of the last prince and pontiff of the Asmoneans were celebrated with more than royal magnificence: the most precious perfumes were burnt on his tomb, and the most splendid ornaments enriched it.

But Alexandra from that moment lived only for vengeance. She wrote to Cleopatra the details of the death of her murdered son, accused Herod of the crime, and called on the Queen of Egypt, as a woman, a mother, and a sovereign, to avenge it. Cleopatra testified the most active sympathy in her behalf, implored Mark Antony to avenge so heinous a crime: and she who never implored in vain, was not now unsuccessful. "It was you," said Cleopatra, "who placed this usurper Herod on the throne of the young prince he has murdered,* and you are answerable for the crime if you do not avenge it."

Antony hastened to Laodicea, and cited Herod to appear before him, to answer the awful accusation. Herod saw his danger; and believing that Cleopatra, Alexandra, and Mariamne, the three fates that overruled his destiny, had laid a deep conspiracy against his life, and that certain death awaited him, his rage and jealousy resolved themselves into the dark design of binding up the life of the too well-beloved Mariamne with his own. He consigned to his sister Salome and her husband, Joseph (whom he left regent of Palestine), the order that, in the event of his own death, the execution of Mariamne should instantly follow. He loved her with that intense passion (says Josephus,) and he so feared that the designs of Antony were on the person of the sister, and not to revenge the death of the brother, that he resolved at once to avenge himself, and to prevent any other from possessing her.

Scarcely had Herod arrived at Laodicea, when the report reached Jerusalem that he had been put to death by Mark Antony. Joseph, in love, or in compassion, had betrayed to Mariamne the orders of her ferocious husband; and

* Josephus, book xv. chap. xi.

Alexandra, who had shared this perilous confidence, had taken measures for placing the young queen and her two sons under the protection of the Roman eagles, (the army of Julius being then encamped in the suburbs of Jerusalem). She was already hastening away with her precious charge, when Herod, to the consternation of many, and the surprise of all, suddenly appeared in his palace in Jerusalem, and threw himself at the feet of Mariamne, more powerful and more enamoured than ever. But the feelings of this unhappy Hebrew princess had now overcome all discretion; and she spurned from her presence, with expressions of hatred and indignation, the master of her destiny, reproaching him with his intention of consummating the destruction of her family, by her own murder.

The treacherous arts of Salome, and the immediate execution of her husband Joseph, the mock trial of Mariamne for a conspiracy against the life and throne of her husband, filled up the measure of this historic domestic tragedy. Mariamne was condemned to death, and she died with the calmness of an infant, and the heroism of a martyr;—"testifying (says Josephus) the same noble spirit at the moment of her death, which had ennobled her life."

Alexandra now stood alone—childless! She appeared at the trial and execution of her daughter in a state of frantic delirium, furious and prominent among the accusers of that idol and innocent victim, and apparently ready to anticipate the executioner in his office of blood. Some believed that this hallucination was only assumed to soften the heart of Herod, or throw him off his guard; and others thought that it was the degradation of a great, but broken spirit, seeking, by unworthy arts, to preserve the fragment of her own life. Alexandra may have, indeed, still wished to live; for her last act showed she had still something to live for—vengeance! The murderer of her husband, brother, son, daughter, kindred, and friends, still existed; and her wrongs were unavenged!

Whatever had been the violence of Herod's passion for Mariamne during her life, it augmented in intensity after her death. Haunted by his crime and his love, he was said to have become frantic by remorse and affection. He went from one excess of grief and rage to another;

and the violence of his regrets and of his contrition drove him from public life. He abandoned the government of Judea—(at the moment it was afflicted by a plague, which he and the nation alike considered as a judgment;) and he flew to the deserts of Samaria, where he was seized with an inflammation of the brain, and with other symptoms beyond the reach of his physician's skill.

It was then that Alexandra recovered her powers of action, and appeared in all her old pertinacity of spirit, and subtilty of resource. She summoned the governor of the two fortresses which dominated Jerusalem, (the one in the heart of the city, the other near the temple, which together commanded the whole country) to surrender them, in the name of the two sons of Herod and of Mariamne; she called on the troops and their officers, and, above all, she called upon the people, to protect the rights of their lineal princes and pontiffs, and to defend their country and their religion; and, struggling for both to the last, with the valour of Judith, and the patriotism of Esther, she fell before a force, against which her spirit and her energies were vainly opposed. Achiab, the nephew of Herod and governor of the citadel, sent a secret intimation of the conduct of Alexandra to the mad and dying king. Her name roused his fierce energy, acting like a spell upon his prostrated spirit; and, with the first gleam of returning reason, or of habitual cruelty, he expedited an order for her instant death.

Thus fell Alexandra, the last of the heroic female patriots of Israel—a memorable manifestation of mind under the influence of the outraged affections of maternity, a martyr to physical violence, directed against her rights and life by the passions of man in his high mastery over all, save himself! Herod lived on, feared and execrated; and died a dreadful death, to be cursed to all posterity. The victim of his victims, he "never (says the most favourable of all his historians) recovered his mind, or held any power over his infuriate passions, after the murder of Mariamne;" until, at length, he whom Augustus called "friend," and the world called "great," imbued his hands in the blood of his own sons, and became known to posterity by scarcely any other cognomen, than that well befitting an infanticide—"the murderer of the innocents."

In the sixty-seventh year of the Christian era, and on the 17th day of the month of July, during the siege of Jerusalem, the Emperor Titus, either sated with blood, or struck with remorse, suddenly paused in the heat of his fearful victory, on learning "that on that day the mystery of the sacrifice had ceased to be offered on the Altar of the Lord; there being no person left alive in the Temple competent to the celebration of the most ancient of all known religious rites."

The Jews had, during the siege of their capital, occupied the Temple of Jerusalem as a fortress; and Titus now called upon them to come forth to fight in the open plains, and to leave the "Holy of Holies" to its sublime and antique usage; permitting them to appoint whom they might choose as "high priest or grand sacrificer:" so that a rite, which was the symbol of their faith and story, might suffer no interruption, nor the sanctuary of their God be further exposed to the sacrilegious violence of the Roman soldiery.

The Jews replied to the humane counsel of their Pagan conqueror by setting fire to their august Temple, by rushing into its flames, and by burying for ever under its ruins their existence as a nation, their unity as a people, and their power as a theocracy—but their idiosyncrasy as a race still survives.*

Scattered over the face of the earth, the Jews were thenceforward for ages hunted like wild beasts, persecuted, oppressed, and spurned, for adhering to a creed whose profession was connected with no one earthly good, or worldly interest. Almost exterminated at one period by Pagan conquerors, for resisting their temporal power, they were massacred by millions at another by Christian heroes, for denying their spiritual supremacy. The common rights of humanity were violated for centuries, and the unalienable rights of mind paralysed in their persons; and they are even now, in this age of boasted humanity,

* The hereditary transition of physical and moral qualities, so well understood and familiarly acted on in the management of domestic animals, is equally observable in man. "In the human species, where the object is of such consequence, the principle is almost wholly overlooked."—*Lawrence.*

pent up in the loathsome purlieus of the eternal city, under the key of "the servant of the servants" of him, who was the prophesied descendant of the house and lineage of Abraham!—while they are loaded with the penalties of prejudice, with the disabilities of law, by those protestant communities, which daily invoke in their litanies "the son of David," "who was to reign over the house of Jacob for ever." Such are the incoherencies of human reason, even in times of the highest known civilisation, and the widest spread of knowledge.

Still, "though suffrance be the badge of all their tribe,"* the Hebrews, that greatest living fragment of a primitive society, have wrested, through the exercise of their characteristic forethought, a power which has made the greatest potentates of the earth their debtors.† With this moral endowment, they have also preserved their original physiology, through the influence of maternal organization, which their great legislator endeavoured to perpetuate, by many of the most striking dispensations of his singular code.

Wherever the women of the Hebrews ("the daughters of Sarah and Rebecca, who built up the house of Israel,") are to be found—and where are they not?—they still exhibit the type of that intellectual beauty, which subdued Egypt, and reformed the penal statutes of Persia; and their fine heads are cited by science as models of the highest moral conformation.‡ Bright thoughts flash from their bright eyes, quick perceptions animate their noble lineaments; and if the force of circumstances is no longer directed to elicit the high qualities of an Esther or a Judith, the original of the picture drawn by the prophet

* "You call me misbeliever, cut-throat, dog, and spat upon my Jewish gabardine; and all for use of that which is mine own."—*Shakspeare.*

Such was the social position of the Jew in England, in the reign and times of the "Solomon of the North."

† "SHYLOCK.—Fair sir, you spat on me on Wednesday, you spurned me such a day! another time you call me dog!—and for these courtesies I'll lend you thus much moneys!

"ANTONIO.—I am as like to call thee so again, to spit on thee, to spurn thee, too! If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not as to thy friends!"—*Merchant of Venice.*

‡ The head of a Georgian woman and of a Jewish girl are quoted by Blumenbach and Lawrence, as the most perfect specimens of the intellectual characteristics of the Caucasian formation!

king, of the virtuous woman "whose price is above rubies," may be found among the Jewish women of modern as of ancient times; for "they eat not the bread of idleness," and "the hearts of their husbands trust them."

Still superior, as were the Hebrew women, to their masters, through their spiritualized nature, and the temperament of their sex, (a superiority acknowledged by their prophets, and upheld by the wisest of their legislators) their wrongs, from the first, were mighty; their disabilities, to the end, many. The last of their prophets* thundered in vain his denunciations against the injustice of their masters; and their most accredited historians† have left on authentic record the enumeration of their wrongs, and the absurdity of their oppressors: ancient laws and modern prejudices have been alike unfavourable to their happiness and social consideration.

Solomon first gave out from his harem, "from garments cometh moths, and from women wickedness"—a characteristic maxim from the destroyer of Uriah. A modern Rabbin has improved on the proverb, by writing a work "on the embarrassment of the Deity as to the necessity of creating a female."‡ The merits of the sex have no higher illustration, nor its wrongs a more authenticated record, than are to be found in the sacred and profane history of the women of the Hebrews!

The pride of Israel was passing fast away—"the enemy had come in like a flood" upon the city of David, the eagles of the Pagan Cæsars fluttered over the portals of the Temple of Jehovah,§ and their banners, emblazoned with images,‖ replaced the consecrated "standards of the twelve tribes,"¶ when the greatest of the Hebrew prophecies received its accomplishment. The temporal power of

* Malachi, chap. ii. verse 19.

† Dissertatio historico-moralis, de malis eruditorum.

‡ L'Influence des Femmes sur la Christianisme, par Gregoire, Bishop of Blois.

§ Josephus.

‖ "Les Juifs supporterent si impatiemment que Pilate gouverneur de Judée eût fait entrer dans Jerusalem des drapeaux où etait la figure de l'empereur, qu'il les en fait retirer. Autre émotion des Juifs qu'il chastie!" —*Josephus.*

¶ Numbers, chap. ii. verse 2.

the men of Judah was prostrate in the dust; and if there was one among the descendants of Abraham, who was still deemed worthy of a spiritual mission, or of the fulfilment of a mystic prophecy, that one was found among the women of the Hebrews! But she, whom from thenceforth "all generations were to call blessed," was not of the queenly daughters of the Asmoneans, nor of the female toparchists "of the house of Herod;" she was not one of the princesses who lived in palaces with "windows of agate and gates of carbuncles," and who died bequeathing provinces to imperial sovereigns.* She was "of low estate"—"A virgin espoused to a man, whose name was Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary."

And when the "magi" or "wise men" of the East were miraculously directed to seek and do homage to the mother "of the son of the Highest," "they found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in a manger."†

Nearly twenty centuries have joined "the years beyond the flood," since the occurrence of this most important of all events, by which the sex has been glorified beyond all distinctions, which the world has ever lavished on its mightiest masters—and still the name of "Mary" is heard with tender reverence, or invoked with pious faith, wherever the religion of "peace and good will on earth to all men" has been revealed or accepted.

Still, however, this "Regina Cœli" of countless altars, this "mater dolorosa" of eternal sympathies, before whose divinely human image the kings of the earth have bent the knee, and they who so long governed kings still fall prostrate,‡ was yet in her human nature and affections but "highly favoured and blessed among women!"

* Salome, the sister of Herod, gave by will her Toparchy of Jamnia, and the forest of palms which she had planted at Phazsaelis, to the Empress Livia, wife of Augustus Cæsar.

† St. Luke.

‡ The Madonnas of Raphael, and above all, of Guido, have a touch of inspiration in them, that renders them the miracles of genius—miracles which have now ceased to be worked perhaps for ever.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

The Women of Classical Antiquity—in Greece.

THE most ancient empires of the earth had fallen and disappeared, but the tide of humanity rolled onward! Of the many regions in which the primitive families of man found a resting-place, during their progressive migrations, there was one so favoured by nature and circumstance for the purposes of social developement, that its colonies at once arrived, as if by a natural instinct, at institutions, such as, under causes less fostering, have been the slow results of repeated experiment—the tardy triumphs of patient perseverance under reiterated failure.

Small in extent, covered with forests, and deficient in all the physical elements of spontaneous fertility, Greece suddenly started forth, the seat of a precocious refinement, the parent of a gifted race, whose genius, and whose wisdom stand in the foreground of the benighted past, a bright beacon to guide the ignorant future through countless generations. While the aborigines, so called, of this favoured land, are so fruitlessly sought in the night of ages, as to have enabled their descendants to arrogate for them the epithet of "earth born," tradition has yet retained the recollection that they were, in the fullest sense of the terms, rude, unaccommodated, and unacquainted even with the simplest agriculture, until they became blended with nobler and more enterprising races.

By a series of emigrations, Chaldea brought them her astronomical calendar, Phœnicia her letters and her commerce, and Egypt the scantling of her arts, a shadow of her polity, and the exterior at least of her ancient re-

ligion. That the colonies of these nations, led forth for predatory purposes, not overwhelming in numbers, and maintaining little subsequent communication with the mother country, could have preserved more than a faint memory of the civilisation of the parent states, is highly improbable; and the supposition is contradicted by the wide divergence of the Grecian institutes, from their original models: the admixture, however, of a foreign people with the primitive stock seems to have exerted a most powerful and enduring influence on the character of their common descendants.

But whatever may have been the causes, the fabulous dream of times called heroic had scarcely given place to the realities of history, when the Grecians are discovered in possession of a civilisation, unknown to the more ancient and polished nations of the East; and, living under forms of government, which, by exciting the sensibility of man, and rousing his best energies, gave supremacy to moral over physical force. By the means of this supremacy, they fixed the destiny of Europe, in spite of the rudest shocks of fortune, preserving it, under every vicissitude, in advance of all the other portions of the inhabited globe.

The history of oriental antiquity had been but one dark record of human suffering. Its religion was, for the most part, a ritual of pain and privation; its political institutions degraded the many, to exalt the few; and both combined to generate social habits, which stifled all noble sentiment, fostered individual selfishness, and established, as an irrevocable law, the mastery of one, and the subjection of millions.

The vices and the crimes thus nurtured had reached their maximum, and were already resolving society into its primitive elements, when Greece threw out her barrier of freedom and philosophy, to stem the torrent of slavery and superstition. Sending forth her band of patriots, to prostrate the Persian and his slavish hordes on the plains of Marathon, of Platea, and of Thermopylæ, she afforded an imperishable example of the value of a national sentiment: but by supplying mankind with the new power of analyzing dogma, she did more;—she gave a blow to

consecrated authority, from which it has never since recovered, and she thus cleared a highway to truth and to liberty through free inquiry, for every nation which in all future ages should dare to tread it.

Until Greece existed, humanity was scarcely human; but the constitutional sensibility of her populations, at variance with the institutions founded by the first military colonists, throwing off domestic tyranny,* gave birth to her small but brilliant municipal communities, which rose like stars on the political firmament, and first legalized those "rights of man" which, though often overpowered and obscured, have never since been wholly quenched. Sparta, alone, of all the Grecian states, retained the semblance of a king; but she, too, in her conservatism, furnished her quota of improvement, by establishing the possibility of submitting sovereign authority to the control of the people: she thus gave the first rudiments of a form of government, which, under the name of constitutional monarchy, seems destined to exert an extended and durable influence on the fortunes of the species.

If the cause of this unexampled order of things was the moral and intellectual organization of the Greeks, its reaction contributed largely to the peculiar manifestations of mind, which still brighten, while they fix the interests of society. If Greece, in the times of Hippias and Hipparchus, had her exquisite poets, her Anacreon, and her Simonides, the high priests of the gentler passions, it was the republics which produced those master minds, Pythagoras, Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Anaxagoras, Democritus, Epicurus, with their long and luminous train of disciples, whose writings have first divested truth of its allegorical garb, and exposed it to the popular gaze, preserved its fires through ages of darkness and suffering, and finally guided a re-awakened race of inquirers from the chaos of ignorance and superstition, to the light of religious and philosophical independence.

To the excitements and the responsibilities of a citizen life, the world also is indebted for the historians and the

* [illegible] the period when the Romans (a scion of the same stock) expe[illegible]ir Tarquins.

orators of Greece; and, above all, for those gigantic and master spirits, her tragedians, from whose verses alone might be extracted every principle of high morality, and every lofty and ennobling sentiment, necessary to purify and exalt the species, should all the formal codes and systematic treatises on ethical science, of modern lawgivers, and of school divines, be lost for ever and forgotten.

The sensibility of the Greek temperament discarded, from the mythology of the East, its fierce and gloomy doctrines, and substituted a religion of poetry and of sentiment for a fanaticism of self-denial and of terror. The human sacrifice, introduced in the earliest times of Asiatic barbarity, was replaced by offerings less revolting to humanity, and more flattering to the imagination. To the disgusting scenes of Anthropomancy* (practised before the age of Homer) succeeded divinations of a less brutalizing character. A flower, a bird, a sunbeam, or a cloud, served the purpose of a credulous curiosity; and extorted the smile of the philosopher, if it moved not the phlegm of the priest who pronounced the omen.

The rites of the most fanciful of all religions made life one feast of thanksgiving; and it was proverbially boasted that "each day of the year is a festival in Athens." The temple raised to wisdom was the noblest work of art, when art, no longer used as the symbol of abstraction, became a reflection of nature, and approached, in its harmony, beauty, and simplicity, to the glorious works of the Creator; while the shrine most universal throughout the cities of Greece was graced with the images of maternal beauty and of infant love; a symbol presented by Nature to the religious of all nations.†

But there had always been a celestial as well as a terrestial Venus; and the Greek, like the Egyptian mytho-

* Divination, by the inspection of human sacrifice, the offering of fear and ignorance to evil, has been perpetrated under the name of religion, by almost all nations in their early and barbarous state, or under the influence of religious fanaticism. This horrid worship was found to exist in India (at Cati), in Africa among the Negroes, in America among the Mexicans, and in Europe among the Druids. Some traces of it may be found in the middle ages, in the auto da fe of Catholic countries, and in the Smithfield fires of Protestant England.

† Mythologie comparée.

logy, admitted two Loves: the cradle of the one was rocked on earth, that of the other was placed in heaven. The Greeks had been told by Hesiod, the earliest of their poets, that Love was the soul and creator of the universe; and Plato, the most spiritual of their philosophers, had defined "true love to be the union of pure and virtuous minds." In Athens the statue of this divinity was placed in the temple of Minerva;* and Love and the Muses, by a charming fiction, were thus worshipped together.†

If the Greeks had many vices incidental to their origin and institutes, they could be reproached with the fewest crimes; and of all nations, they were the least cruel.‡ The first altar consecrated to Pity rose in Athens; and when an attempt was made to introduce the barbarous games of Rome, (the murder of man for the amusement of man) the popular feeling revolted, and philosophy exclaimed:—"First raze the altars you have erected to Mercy." It was the same wisdom of an exquisite sensibility that pronounced the then customary trophies raised over a fallen foe, to be "monuments of discord;" and ordained that such memorials should only be made of wood, as the most perishable material of which they could be constructed. These mild sympathies, these generous instincts, of the most intellectual race which the world had till then produced, brought forth an external harmony of form that has become the standard of modern art, the type of grace, and the mould of beauty.

That expression of divine serenity, which always characterizes happy humanity (the poetry of physiognomy, justifying the epithet of the "human face divine") and

* With an inscription, which originated that of Jean de Mean, and which Voltaire has so beautifully turned, in his well-known lines under the statue of Cupid:—"Qui que tu sois voilà ton Maitre," &c.—See also, Galerie de Florence, pierres gravées.

† The festival of "Love and the Muses" was celebrated at the foot of Mount Helicon, with great pomp by the Thespians. "Je ne vois" (says Montaigne) "Je ne vois aucunes Déités qui s'adviennent mieux, ni qui s'entredoivent plus: qui ôtera aux Mûses les imaginations amoureuses, leur derobera le plus bel entretien qu'elles aient, et la plus noble matière de leurs ouvrages."

‡ The massacre of the inhabitants of Melos by the Athenians during the Peloponnesian war, was but an exception. If such exceptions were taken into the account, what nation, however polished or civilized, could hope to escape censure?

which particularly characterizes the portrait-statues of classical antiquity, is but an index of the happy physiology of a race habitually undisturbed by ferocious passions, and undeformed by uneasy sensations. The modern virtuoso, in the indulgence of his refined tastes, as he moves among the godlike images of the Vatican, or of the Capitol (the precious plunder of Athens and of Corinth), forgets that the deities he gazes on are but the representations of living men and women—models furnished from nature by a free and intellectual people, to that sublime genius, which their own temperaments and habits had fostered into perfection.

When the works of Phidias and of Praxiteles are compared with the equally faithful transcripts of the sovereigns of the Roman empire, no clearer evidence can be desired of the inherent difference of faces, and of the reactive influence of the institutes, which these develope. The expression of countenances deficient in sensibility is marked, like that of the animals of prey, by fear and by cruelty; and the vulture and the tiger may be traced in the features of the Caligulas and the Claudiuses, the Neros and the Domitians, as in those of the savages of all regions.* The same expression, too, may be seen in the polished man of the most highly civilized populations, whenever egotism has extinguished sympathy,—when, by giving preponderance to the animal impulses, it has brought back humanity to the brutal hardness it exhibited ere it had first known a touch of pity, or acknowledged that feeling which respects itself in the person of others.

Among the Greeks, whose lives were manifestations of the highest passions, whose religion was poetry, whose

* The horrible countenance of Caligula is noted by Suetonius in his life of that emperor. "Staturâ fuit eminenti, pallido colore, corpore enormi, gracilitate maximâ cervicis et crurum, et oculis et temporibus concavis, fronte latâ et torvâ capillo raro ac circa verticem nullo hirsutus cætera."—Lib. iv. And though the same writer is less severe on the stultified ugliness of Claudius (whom all writers describe as singularly hideous), still he describes the countenance of his passions as fearful and disgusting, and his anger and his laughter to have been equally idiotic and ferocious But the portrait-coins and busts of all those monster-masters of the world, have left a record of the impress made upon the external forms of humanity by the indulgence of brutal and ungoverned passions.

language was music, and whose tutelar deity was "Harmony,"* woman may be supposed, *à priori*, to have held the highest social place which she had as yet been permitted to fill. She who, as a slave, servant, and concubine, had, among the nations of oriental antiquity, only claimed consideration for brief and occasional intervals, through the individual exercise of mental superiority, might, under Grecian polity, be expected to obtain from the sensibility of man those rights, which could not, perhaps, have been extorted from his sense of justice:—this expectation is justified by the fact. To the unprecedented influence of the sex upon the social civilisation and public policy of Greece, from the earliest epoch to the latest and most refined days of its political existence, a perpetual evidence is borne, by the poetry, the arts, and the historic records, of this highly-gifted race.

While religion adopted woman into her mythology,† as best symbolizing the expression of moral and intellectual qualities, of wisdom, chastity, justice, of all the charities, and all the graces of life, even the soul itself, in its most spiritual essence, was represented to human sense by a feminine form. Each different state had its favourite and foundress-goddess. Cecrops brought from Egypt the female divinity of Sais, the Minerva of Athens. Ephesus was devoted to the worship of Diana; and it is a curious circumstance also, that to a female deity the Greeks assigned the invention of agriculture, and its natural consequence, the formation of a legal code,‡ the first and the most characteristic excellencies of the human race. It is highly probable, indeed, that this mythology, in its origin, might not have been a direct and specific homage offered to the sex, but rather an inevitable consequence of certain

* "L' Harmonie était la Déesse de Thèbes."—*Mythologie Comparée.*

† Minerva, Diana, Ceres, Psyche, the Muses, the Graces, and the Fates. A male commentator might, it is true, add the Furies; but these were minor deities, and made no part of the Olympian heavens.

‡ Ceres was on this account dignified with the epithet of "Thesmotheta," the lawgiver. "The mere fact of an extensive practice of agriculture implies the formation of very accurate ideas of property, and the existence of a conventional system, giving practical security to the labourer, during the long interval which elapses between the sowing and the reaping of the harvest."—*Philosophy of Morals, by Sir T. C. Morgan.*

leading conceptions concerning nature and its operations; but it is obvious that, in the subsequent filling out of their religious system, the Greeks dwelt with passionate enthusiasm on that portion of their mythology: and it is still more certain that their apotheosis of womanhood, whatever might have been its cause, must have exercised a powerful influence, favourable to the sex, over the imaginative minds of the Grecian population.

In all the higher functions of religious worship, the administration of woman, by a natural consequence was sought and accepted; and, as priestess, and as pythoness, she officiated at those altars, where Phidias and Praxiteles had elevated her effigies, as fittest to represent the attributes, ascribed to the deities of the national Pantheon.

While woman was thus honoured on earth as the symbol of all beneficence and wisdom, even her human interests became subjects of divine interference; and Apollo is made to speed his arrows into the Greek camp, to avenge the wrongs of the beautiful daughter of Chryseus. Woman was, in fact, the moving principle of the heroic times of Greece; and Helen and Briseis armed men and gods alike, in their quarrels and their wrongs.

But, when fable passed away, history states that Athens owed her first glimpse of freedom to a conspiracy, of which woman was the soul and the depositary. It was the mistress of Harmodius who wreathed the dagger with myrtle, that freed Athens from the tyranny of her "*Jove descended kings.*" Worthy of the great cause by which her name is immortalized, she proved that a woman knew how to conspire, to be silent, and to die.*

The wars of Megara and the Peloponnesus were instigated by a woman's passions, and carried on at her suggestions. The Thebans and the Phocians called their ten years' war "sacred" (as other unholy wars have since

* Leæna, a girl of humble birth, the mistress of Aristogiton and the confidante of his conspiracy against the tyrants of his country, acquired the rights of citizenship by her patriotism, fortitude, and martyrdom. Free Athens in her great days raised a statue to her honour, a virgin lioness, which was placed near the statue of Venus. Pausanias asserts that this monument existed in his time, that is, nearly seven hundred years after the death of Leæna.

been deemed), of which a woman's wrongs were the sole cause; and if the wife of an Asiatic despot armed Persia against the liberties of Greece, the triumph of the free was in part attributed to the influence of the Corinthian women with the god whom they implored. The heroic achievements of the Argive women are equally commemorated for their important consequences; and it is an historical fact that the most inspired of their poetesses was the bravest of their champions and the most devoted of their patriots.

The female genius of Greece was, indeed, always found on the side of the free. It was not to follow Phaon that Sappho fled to Sicily; but, having engaged with him in the confederacy against Pittacus, they were banished together. It was for this that the coins of Mytelene bore the impression of her image; and that her patriotism and her poetry became alike immortal.

In all the great public events of Greece, the influence of the female mind may be detected, even where, under particular institutions, her presence was forbidden. When Pythagoras, in his desire to make proselytes of the ignorant, and extend the influence of his sect, opened his first school of philosophy in Italy,* the "friend of wisdom" was accompanied by female disciples. His wife and daughter taught in his classes; and fifteen other women, of high capacities and attainments, his pupils, gave grace to his stern truths, and became the persuasive missionaries of doctrines, which preached restraint over all the passions, and the supremacy of reason in all things.†

But the women were not only admitted into the schools of philosophy; the philosophers sometimes attended upon theirs. Aspasia, who improved the eloquence, while she perverted the politics of Pericles, lisped her atticisms in the ears of Socrates, till she became rather his teacher than his disciple.‡ The bright eyes of Hipparata long

* Crotona, near the bay of Tarentum, in Magna Grecia.

† Many of the women of Italy were said to attend these schools in the reign of Tarquinius Superbus. Virginia (a marriageable woman) is described as going to her school when she first attracted the notice of Appius Claudius, B. C. 449.

‡ "To Aspasia and her instruction, Pericles owed his eloquence, which she is said to have formed upon the style and model of Gorgias. Such

followed the compass of Euclid, while her lips solved with a smile the problem, which had cost many an aching brow its premature furrow to comprehend. Leontium was painted by the artist Theodorus, meditating the temperate doctrines of Epicurus, which she afterwards expounded in such Greek as excited the envy and admiration of Cicero, who considered her style a model. Even the women of the people, who had not learnt to read, affected a purism in their dialect, worthy of the academy: and, from the critical acumen of the Athenian apple-women, there was no appeal. The arts, too, stood no less indebted to female taste for patronage, than to female grace for inspiration. The noblest work of Praxiteles was purchased by the most beautiful of his models, and that with the generous intention of adorning her native city! Corinth owed the most splendid of her architectural edifices to the liberality of one woman;* and Thebes, ruined by Alexander, might have been rebuilt by another, but that her pride dictated an epigram, which the jealousy of man considered, and rejected, as an epigram.

But who were these gifted and powerful women, these

was the proficiency made by Pericles under his mistress in this science, that it was said of him by the comic poet, Eupolis, 'Persuasion herself was seated on his lips, so did he govern the hearts of his hearers.' The Greeks ranked Persuasion among the deities."—*See Beloe's Alciphron.*

* Laïs employed a great part of her enormous wealth in enriching Corinth with some of its most superb edifices. This idol, in her youth, of poets and philosophers, of kings and priests, lingered out a miserable old age, and died in poverty, and neglect. Her dedication of her mirror to Venus with the following inscription, is well known.

"Je le donne a Vénus, puisqu'elle est toujours belle;
Il redouble trop mes ennuis:
Je ne saurais me voir dans ce miroir fidelle
Ni telle que j'étais, ni telle que je suis."
Ausonius, Traduction de Voltaire.

These verses are by some attributed to Plato. A modern French writer has drawn a parallel between this celebrated Greek frail one, and one of the most popular actresses of her time,—the more than *volage* and witty Sophie Arnould, so often quoted by Grimm, for her brilliant mots, and well-pointed sarcasms. "J'ai vu la femme la plus célèbre de ce siècle par son esprit et par ses conquêtes (celle qui pour-rait le mieux rappeler, l'image d'une courtisane Grecque) Mademoiselle Arnould, implorer des sécours auprès du ministre qui dans sa jeunesse écrivait des vers à ses genoux; je l'ai entendu mêler aux concerts mystiques des obscurs Théophilantropes cette voix qui tonnait dans Armide, qui soupirait en Psyché: alors j'ai gémi en pensant à l'incertitude des événémens et aux mystères de la fatalité."

priestesses of a religion of sentiment, these destinies of free states (whose smiles and frowns decided the fate of despot empires), these adored companions of heroes, these trusted friends of legislators, these disciples of philosophers, and associates of sages, these models of wit and themes of poetry, these professors of the abstruse sciences, and enlightened lovers of all the refined arts, which tend to soften and cheer society, and to convert man from barbarism to civilisation?

Were they the honest mothers and virtuous wives of the free and noble citizens of the Greek states? the women of the Demos of Athens, or of the soldier patriots of Sparta? Was their knowledge acquired, were their talents developed, under institutions peculiarly favourable to the cultivation of female intellect? Were such accomplishments united to those moral qualities which give to wise maternity the character and influence of a wholesome legislation?

Gifted as such women must have been by nature, gifted as they notoriously were with that personal beauty peculiar to their climes and races, and with those fine perceptions of the beautiful and the true in works of art and literature—were they themselves ennobled, by that sense of rights to be enjoyed, and of duties to be performed, which creates the crowning perfection of all character in either sex?

No; these women, whose names are linked with those of the greatest and wisest men of antiquity, were the outcasts of society—its admiration, its pride, and its shame—the agents of its refined civilisation, the instruments of its rapid moral corruption.

Born in slavery, or sold to it, infant captives taken in war, or of a class too lowly to be recognised as citizens by the state, these victims of civil combinations, foredoomed by the accidents of their birth, or of their lives, to an inevitable social degradation, had one privilege incidental to their singular lot; and of that they availed themselves, to the triumph of mind over station, and of usurping acquirement over established ignorance. They were not under the ban of that intellectual proscription, which was reserved by the law for the virtuous and the chaste.

Chartered libertines, of their minds as of their actions, they were left free to pursue the bent of their natural talents, to sip at the fountain of every science, to cull the flowers of rhetoric, to rifle the whole hive of knowledge, and to possess themselves of the treasures of philosophy.

Thus gifted, they obtained a mastery over all that was eminent in the male population; and, possessing the hearts of statesmen, orators, and philosophers, became influential on the destinies of the people. Standing half way between virtue and vice, a class apart, in the social distinctions of the sex, the Hetæræ,* or "fair friends," frequently exhibited the qualities of honest men, though they wanted the purer virtues of honest women. Such estimable qualities, however, were but happy accidents—an anomaly, not a general rule. The position of these women was a false one, dangerous to the best interests of society; and their privileges and their influence (for rights they had none), though uncontrolled by the lawgiver, and freely permitted by the conventional manners of the times and country, became a deteriorating principle, which worked out the political ruin of Greece, through its moral depravity.

It was the early and fatal mistake of the Greek legislation, under the impressions of Asiatic influence, to fear the developement of the mind of woman, to make ignorance the guarantee of chastity, to separate virtue from the graces, and to deprive modesty of all those attractions which rendered even vice respectable.

"The wife for house and honour, the Hetæræ for our

* The *Hetæræ* and *Parasites* of Greek society were two orders of persons, whose influence on domestic manners and happiness has scarcely any parallel in modern times; of the former, Beloe observes in his Alciphron, "a very long and perhaps useful account might be written. The various accomplishments which they studied to acquire, and were known to possess; the influence they had, not only over private manners, but over public affairs: the rank which was assigned them in the state of society, and the deference which was on many occasions paid them by the best of men, (and this not with a view to sensuality, but to mental improvement,) must tend to make their history well deserving of notice."

The term *Parasite*, however degraded and contemptible it became in succeeding times, was not so in its original signification. The office annexed to the name was once highly honourable, and the word, according to Athenæus, was considered synonymous to guest.

solace and delight," was the dogma of the philosopher, as of the voluptuary; and the personal egotism that adopted it, became in the end the ruin of the state, which it demoralized and enervated.*

The mental cultivation of the "Hetæræ," like the magnificent robe and gems assigned them by a law of Solon's (to mark the degradation of their class) threw a splendour over their humiliating position, veiling the moral delinquencies, to which their uncontrolled passions and sordid conduct inevitably led. Irresponsible, as they were influential, these companions of heroes, statesmen, and philosophers, were not, till the last corrupt days of Pericles, allowed to pollute with their presence the society of the wives of these faithless husbands.

Well studied in human nature, the Hetæræ knew that they held their tenure not so much by the personal charms that subdued, as by the cunning which mastered the weakness of men, whose passions and vanities† they considered as their natural instruments. They felt that, in the midst of all their fascinations, there was still wanting that natural bond of holy affinity between them and their enamoured masters, which in married life is created by parental ties avowed, by parental pride shared, and reciprocally encouraged. The son of the Hetæræ, however he acknowledged her genius or influence, blushed to call her mother; and he was even released, by a special law, at

* Whether Alciphron compiled or composed his "Epistles," it may be assumed that he adopted the style, manner, and phraseology of the persons in whose character he wrote; and enough comes forth in this curious and almost *unique* sample of "the domestic manners of the higher and of the lower order of the Greeks," and of their epistolatory style, to prove the charms, mental and personal, of the dangerous Hetæræ. Meneclides, speaking of the death of his beautiful mistress, Bacchis, says, "She has left me many a tear, and the remembrance of an attachment, oh! how sweet an attachment, never repented of to the last. How she spoke! how many lyrics were there in her conversation! persuasion sat upon her lips; and she wore the cestus that included all the graces! The little songs she sung while the wine went round—the lyre she touched with her ivory fingers!—all is gone! and she who was the care of all the Graces now is mute! a stone—a heap of ashes."—*Alciphron's Epistles*, letter xxxviii. book i.

† Both the cupidity and the contempt of the Hetæræ for many of their illustrious and philosophical friends, is humorously depicted in the Epistles of the heroines of Alciphron.

variance with those of Nature, from all the tender duties imposed by filial sympathy, towards a parent who had entailed on him only an heritage of shame.*

While contumely and suspicion were sometimes the portion of the beautiful and intelligent Hetæræ, even in her bloom of youth and genius, poverty and neglect were frequently her doom in age. The chaste Athenian wife, on the other hand, generally speaking, found her apartment deserted by her husband; while the luxurious villas of the mistress were the rendezvous, not only of the young and wealthy celibataires, but of the middle-aged and the married—of magistrates, military chiefs, legislators, poets, and philosophers. In both instances, the sense of right or wrong, of moral feeling, and of political principle, broke down under the universal corruption; and the result proved that public liberty cannot long subsist, where social demoralization prevails.†

The terms of equality on which the Hetæræ lived, not only with the most eminent geniuses, but with the most despotic sovereigns of their times, are clearly shown in the power which Lamia obtained over the heart of Ptolemy, King of Egypt, and over the ceremonious pride and state grandeur of Demetrius, who in vain endeavoured to awe her humour into respect, by visiting her in a complete suit of armour, and crowned with a jewelled diadem.‡

Menander hesitated between the tempting offer of Ptolemy, King of Egypt, and the society of the witty but frail

* "Un fils est obligé de nourir dans leur viellesse ceux dont il a recu le jour; mais les enfans qui sont nés d'une courtisane sont dispensés de cette obligation à l'égard de leur père; car, après tout, ils ne lui sont redevables que de l'opprobre de leur naissance."—*Diog. Laer. in Solon—Plutarch.* This "opprobrium" marks, in the strongest manner, the condition of the courtesan.

† Still the Hetæræ defended themselves from the imputations urged against them by the stoics and sophists, in their humorous attacks upon both. When Thais was reproached by Stilpo for corrupting the youth of Athens, she replied—"We, too, prefer a similar accusation against you; for the disciples of your corrupt philosophy turn out useless, as well as disputatious; and if corruption is the result, whether through the Hetæræ or the sophist, it comes to the same point."—*Athenæus.* Alciphron has availed himself of these arguments, in his epistle of Thais to the affected and would-be philosopher, Euthydemus.

‡ See Plutarch and Alciphron's Epistles.

Glycera.* Plato, who had written and said so many fine things of "celestial love," laid aside his philosophy to pen sonnets on the dawning wrinkles of his fair friend, Archeanassa;† and Sophocles, the most moral of dramatists, attested how little his life accorded with his doctrines, by his infatuation for his young mistress, Archippa, to whom he bequeathed his property by will. The many philosophic sects of disputatious Greece, divided as they were, forgot their sophistical disputes and their metaphysical subtleties, in the boudoir of that young slave of Corinth, who first inspired the genius of Apelles, subdued the cynicism of Diogenes, vanquished the epicurean indolence of Aristippus, and put to the test the stoicism of Anaxagoras.

CHAPTER II.

The Domestic Life of Pericles. Aspasia.

THE influence obtained over society by these accomplished but dangerous agents of its pleasures and its passions, at last induced the most brilliant and able demagogue of any age or nation to adopt their demoralizing power as a state engine; and Pericles chose the salon of Aspasia as the scene of those corrupting experiments, which preceded the downfall of liberty in Athens, and ended in the entire ruin of Greece.

The character of Pericles was one of those lucky adaptations to cotemporary times and circumstances, which insure success,—not by the highest qualities that

* "Vous corrompez la jeunnesse," disait Stilpon à Glycère—"Et toi sophiste, tu le corromps et tu l'ennuies."—*Lync. ap Athen.*

† "L'aimable Archéanasse a merité ma foi;
Elle a des rides, mais je vois
Une troupe d'amours se jouer dans ses rides.
Vous qui pûtes la voir, avant que ses appas
Eussent du cours des ans reçu les petites vides,
Ah! que ne souffrites vous pas!"
Politian—Traduction de Fontenelle.

ought to command it, but by that peculiar fitness (for evil or for good) which almost always wins it. Of illustrious birth, great wealth, brilliant talents, and refined education, the gifted pupil of Xeno, and ardent disciple of Anaxagoras, was born for the epoch he illustrated. His quick, if not profound, perceptions gleaned a rapid view of the laws of nature from one preceptor, and a contempt of superstition from the other; and he obtained the reputation of a philosopher, from his intimacy with both, though it subjected him to the imputation of being a free thinker. The circumstances of the times gave him an early opportunity of signalizing his intrepid and petulant courage; and, at a moment most favourable to the triumph of sophistry, they also afforded the occasion for exerting that natural eloquence, which adapted its variable character to the passions of each successive audience, to which he addressed it.

With a person distinguished by nobility, and a voice which recalled the traditional melody of that of Pisistratus, (his accomplished type,) ambitious, corrupt, voluptuous, and daring, this brilliant demagogue succeeded in giving his name to an age, for ever memorable in the history of the human mind. By his private vices and selfish views, if he did not originate, he hurried on that revolution in the manners, morals, and institutes of Greece, for which the influx of wealth and luxury had already prepared the way.

The successor of Aristides and Themistocles, the rival and persecutor of Cymon, had already established a personal despotism over the most democratic republican government of the earth. Under frivolous pretexts, he had annihilated the authority of the Areopagus, (the last barrier against licentious innovations both on public and private virtue,) when a new view of demoralization was suggested to him, by the peculiar endowments of one, whose influence over his mind and actions was referable to institutions, giving to vice that power which should alone belong to virtue.

Aspasia of Miletus, called the Sophist, was one of those notable personages, whose character and influence best record the manners of the age in which they flourish.

The women of Miletus in Asia Minor had long been celebrated for their intellectual endowments, as for their personal graces. It seemed that this exquisite region (colonized from Crete, whose women were a proverb) was the *nido paterno* of Grecian wit and beauty; and Aspasia may have been more the disciple than the foundress of that school of intellectual fascination, which gives the permanency of a moral impression to the fleeting witchery of personal charms.* This splendid and mischievous Hetæra flourished at a moment, when, as a modern French writer has observed, "le sort de la Gréce était entre les mains des courtisanes."

Of all the female celebrities of antiquity, none has obtained a greater reputation, for talent, grace, and eloquence, and, above all, for a resistless power over the minds or passions of man, than Aspasia. Still her reputation is but a tradition; and little emanating from herself remains to testify her great intellectual superiority.† No "divine verse," the poetry of passion, like that of Sappho; no philosophical views preserved by a style (like that of Leontium,) which provoked the admiration and envy of Cicero; no brilliant *mots*, which have passed over the sweep of two thousand years, like the sallies and epigrams of Glycera and Lais, nor any one act of high intellectual energy in favour of public good, such as marks the undeniable endowments of others of her order, stand on record to brighten (if they could not excuse) the private vices of the woman. Her influence over Pericles was that of one well versed in the passions and weakness of man, and capable of governing them only for her own interest and advantage, or for the gratification of her own vanity and ambition.

As the mistress or wife of Pericles, the master of Athens

* It is impossible to omit the fact, that the early people of Miletus planted (according to Seneca) colonies in all parts of the world;—the supposition may, therefore, be indulged that the *beau sang* of the Cretan women may have been transmitted to the motherhood of *Milesian* Ireland.

† There is still extant a fragment of a dialogue between Aspasia and Socrates (given by Athenæus) and a discourse cited by Cicero. But "conversations" or "discourses" are of doubtful authenticity in any ages. It is easy to make dead men or dead women talk according to the circumstance for which their conversations are to be applied.

and of the Ægean, Aspasia had much at her disposition wherewith to bribe even Philosophy itself, and to purchase eulogy (where superior genius might have been "damned with faint praise,") even though the verses of the state courtezan had not been poetry, nor her rhetoric, eloquence. The guests, too, who frequented the republican palace of her protector, and occupied cushions on the couches that surrounded his sumptuous table, (eminent as many of them were,) were after all but men, and may have unconsciously granted much to the ministering agent of all public distinctions, (and of other less honourable gratifications), which they would have hesitated to assign to the same quantum of talent, in women less powerful and corrupt. Allowing, however, to Aspasia the full reputation assigned to her, it is both possible and probable, that talents equally brilliant might have been latent in the neglected minds of many of the contemporary wives, who lived neglected, and who died unknown.

But while they, to whom the "honour and house" of the Athenian husband were consigned, lived on, as it were, by stealth, condemned to an enfeebling intercourse with slaves and children, to the labours of a tapestry frame, or the recreation of playing with Maltese lap-dogs and Sicilian doves, (no bad type of female existence in more modern times), the Hetæræ, the all-accomplished, but frequently all-depraved Hetæræ, were benefiting by the conversation and instruction of the most eminent statesmen, philosophers, and military chiefs of the age, who dignified the hired mistress with the name of "fair friend," an order chosen from the oppressed sex, for their special "solace and delight."

The licentious habits of Pericles, (who lived openly with the beautiful Chrysella, after his son had attained to manhood,) the jealousy and indignant resentment of his wife (his own cousin, and the plighted of another, from whom he forced her, an unwilling bride), his dislike of and severity to his eldest son, Xantippus, repaid by an unfilial aversion, as deeply felt as publicly avowed, rendered the domestic life of the chief of the Athenian republic a humiliating contrast to his public career and brilliant reputation. The legislator and hero of the

people, was the least loved, the least respected, and the least respectable of citizens, in his own home.

It was in the midst of domestic broils, that Pericles first saw and became enamoured of Aspasia, who had been educated by her father, or her master (for her origin is obscure), for that profession which justifies Plato's definition of terrestrial love.*

After the birth of a son, to whom the degraded Athenians, in violation of their laws, accorded the title of "citizen," Pericles resolved on marrying the mother; and he repudiated his wife, to give that honourable title to a woman, who, with all her admitted talents, had hitherto lived only by her vices. Society, then as now, excluded women from all legitimate sources by which they might provide for their subsistence; and opened its portals only to reward the exercise of their frailties.

The example of Aspasia, her talents and her influence over the chief of the government, produced the most fearful moral results. Athens had from that epoch, her school of pleasure, as of philosophy. The mistress-wife, under the roof of her weak though illustrious husband, was at the head of a society which reduced libertinism to a system, and rendered vice seductive, by the grace and talent with which it was combined. The story of Pagan antiquity had no parallel for this strange contrast of the lofty social position of demoralized habits. It was reserved for the courts of the most Christian kings of the most civilized state of modern Europe to present one; and the court and mistresses of the two despots, whose corrupt reigns and examples hurried on the Revolution of France, may be considered as approaching nearest to the system adopted by Pericles and Aspasia, for the ruin of public liberty by the sure agency of moral depravation.

Aspasia, in the midst of her seducing nymphs, the models of art, and theme of poetry, giving lessons in eloquence to Socrates, and receiving from the master-mind of Greece instruction in dialectics and induction,—Aspasia, the wife of Pericles, sharing more than her

* When the birth of the volatile god was ascribed to Zephyr and Flora by a poet, Plato replied: "Know his origin better; he is the offspring of sordid interest."

studies with his friend, the gifted and unprincipled Alcibiades, was a singular instance of the incoherence of the institutes of man, when at odds with his passions. This Omphale of the political Hercules of the age, this Minerva of all the poets, parasites,* sophists, and rhetoricians of Greece, who swallowed her pedantry with her pea-hens' eggs, and repaid her nectar of Naxos with flattery as intoxicating, had finally the triumph of seeing some of the most virtuous women in Athens brought by their husbands to breathe the inebriating incense† which perfumed her voluptuous saloon, and of beholding the law of Solon thus repealed in her favour.

But while Pericles thus availed himself of the arts of Aspasia, her influence over his mind produced the most fatal effect on his policy. To gratify her personal pique, he attacked and took Samos; and to avenge her quarrels (originating in the most shameful causes,) he undertook the expedition against Megara, of which the twenty-three years of the Peloponnesian war was the consequence.

Aspasia, with her usual accompaniment of attendant nymphs, had the effrontery to embark on board the fleet with Pericles, in presence of the Athenian people, when the chief of the government set forth for Samos: but if hers was the effrontery, whose was the weakness which permitted it?

It was on the return of Pericles from this inglorious but conquering expedition, that he was received with triumphal honours, and that even the ladies of Athens were brought forth by their husbands to crown him with flowers and to kiss his hands. But there was one among them who indignantly refused these marks of homage. It was Elpinice, the sister of the immortal Cimon, who, addressing Pericles as he stood in the tribune (where he had harangued the people with his usual sophistical eloquence), asked, "What have you done to wear the triumphal crown?—have you returned from a victory over the barbarian enemies of Greece?—have your laurels been gathered in fields where the Medians were put to flight, and the Per-

* "Les parasites qui s'établissent chez les gens riches pour faire les honneurs de la maison, et faire rire les convives."—*Anacharsis*, v. ii.

† "On y brule d'encens et d'autres odeurs."—*Ibid.*

sians vanquished?—it was there, that Cimon, my brother, gathered his laurels! You have, indeed, returned victorious; but over whom?—over a free city of Greece! an ancient ally of Athens."

To the epigram of Elpinice, Pericles replied by a smile and a quotation, the point of which is now lost; though its brutality might have been well suited to the gallantry of the "finest gentleman of his times:" for no men are so deficient in true courtesy to women as those who have lived most with the vilest. Still, amidst all the triumphs of a brilliant despotism, supported by a corrupt and licentious oligarchy, there was a voice, neither "small" nor "still," which testified against the vices of the chief of the Athenian government and his partisan and paramour, and which found a deathless echo in the moral instincts of the people. Whether Cratinus and Eupolis, and other satirists, who were wont to set the theatres of Athens in a roar, at the expense of the "Olympian Pericles" and of Aspasia, his Juno, were received or not into the select circles of the government house, certain it is that the wit of those Molières and Scribes of classical antiquity left no weakness of the one, no vice of the other, unridiculed and unreproved.

It was, however, the policy of Pericles to leave the libels unnoticed and the libellers unpunished. He considered these outbreaks of ridicule against his private vices as the safety-valves of his political power; and when all other liberties had been abolished, the apparent liberty of the pen was preserved, during his whole reign, for the purpose of amusing the people, and of blinding them.

The latter days of Pericles were as clouded as his dawn had been brilliant. The priesthood—that priesthood which had spared the vices of Aspasia, and left her life unreproved—became alarmed by the reputation of her philosophy; and when she was denounced as sharing the opinions of Anaxagoras, and exposed to the same persecution, (for the wisest and most pious man of his age stood in the category of accusation before the holy office of Athens, with Alcibiades and Aspasia,) Pericles, who could neither save the sage nor the hero, pleaded with his tears, (more powerful than his eloquence) for his mistress-wife.

Persecution, which had already seized upon its victim, yielded her up to the humiliating supplications of him, whose debasement soothed the pride of the diviners whom he had laughed at, and gratified the vengeance of the people, who, in resigning their liberty, had become the more jealous of their superstitions.*

Oppressed by domestic misfortune, and borne down by public mortification, Pericles died a lingering and inglorious death, surviving his great intellect, and outliving his powerful volitions. But the influence of his temperament and his habits remained to the end: for when, in his last moments, an attending friend perceived an amulet suspended from his neck, and inquired what it meant, he replied,—"the ruling passion strong in death,"—that it was a *spell given him by a woman.*†

Aspasia long survived her almost royal husband; and the widow of the chief of the Athenian republic, acting under the influence of that desire, latent in the hearts even of the most depraved of the sex, "to be made an honest woman," married Sycicles, a cattle-merchant of Attica; but such was the ascendency of her genius, or the magic of her reputation, that she succeeded in raising this ordinary personage to the first offices in the republic.

The vices of Aspasia were those of the institutes under which she lived, and of the men with whom she lived. But her genius was her own; and the power she obtained over the wisest and greatest characters of her time, proved at least her intelleotual capacity for a higher and more

* The corruption and weakness of the Athenian people, and the increasing power of the priesthood originated that persecuting bigotry, so unprecedented in Pagan toleration. Alcibiades, whose vices were so often forgiven, whose crimes against liberty and morals were so often forgotten, was prosecuted and exiled for his disrespect to the statue of Mercury! Phidias, accused of sacrilegious peculation in the execution of his glorious work, the statue of Minerva, was tried, acquitted, and yet died in chains. Anaxagoras, the victim of priestly persecution, accused of disrespect to the Olympian church, saved himself by a long and miserable exile; and though Aspasia is said to have pleaded her own cause, and defended herself from the charge of infidelity with great eloquence, it was the utter humiliation of Pericles before the "sacred tribunal" which saved, from the penalty of heterodoxy, her to whose moral delinquencies so great a latitude had been granted.—*Diod. Lib.* xii., p. 95. *Plutarch on Pericles*, p. 169.

† Theophrastus, translation of Amyot.

honourable position than that she had occupied, and to which the laws and conventional manners of Greece had foredoomed her. With all her influence and all her talents, she was still a demoralized and a demoralizing creature; and the selfishness with which she sacrificed the general good, to her own private interests and personal passions, is one of the thousand proofs which evince the high philosophy of that well-turned maxim:—"Que la galanterie est presque toujours la moindre faute d'une femme galante."*

But while passion and egotism thus raised to power the frail and degraded woman, and taught the sex to consider infamy as the surest stepping-stone to social influence, what did the reason and justice of the Greeks effect, for the encouragement of virtue in the wife and mother? The Egyptian Cecrops, the early legislator of Athens, abolished polygamy, and ordained that marriage, a consecrated union with one woman, should be dissoluble only by death, or a legal divorce. He even admitted the wives of the free citizens to something like political rights; allowing them to attend all public meetings in which the affairs of state were discussed.

But Solon, who either brought a more oriental temperament to the construction of his code, or found, perhaps, in the Athenians of his day, vices which existed not in the time of his wiser predecessor, treated the sex with less esteem. Marriage, indeed, he left on its original footing; but by considering woman less as a member than as a ward of the state,—as a being whose intellectual capacity would never attain to majority—he took the shortest and most effectual means for providing that she never should. Multifarious as were his laws for the education of the male youth, for the developement of their every faculty,—for the utmost cultivation of every natural endowment, he was contemptuously silent on the moral and intellectual education of females. He, who provided for the elegant texture of the courtezan's drapery, left to chance the instruction of the Athenian daughters; or rather, perhaps, designedly forbade the cultivation of their minds, lest their

* La Bruyère.

aspirations after knowledge should diminish their aptitude for domestic drudgery and monotonous seclusion.

Whatever laws were framed in reference to the sex, were provisions of restraint, not of protection. They considered the free women, as they did the slaves, only as members of the family, not as constituents of the republic. The paramount object of the lawgiver was the legitimacy of the infant citizen; and to obtain that, his coarse agency sought only the incarceration of the neglected mother, who, condemned to the solitude of the Gynæcium (the homeliest and remotest apartment of her husband's sumptuous mansion) seldom saw the lord of her destiny, or associated with her male relations.

Even that model of Athenian husbands, the wise and virtuous Ischomachus, the friend of Socrates, is quoted as saying, that "there were few men with whom he had conversed so seldom, or of whom he had seen so little, as he had of his own wife." "Yet," observes Xenophon, "his regard for her was as great as it was virtuous." The Athenian of later times, indeed, could no longer sell his daughter or sister; but, whatever her age, the unmarried woman was placed under the tutelage and control of her male relations. Fathers, grandfathers, and brothers, contracted the marriages of the better classes of women, without their knowledge or consent: and when no such relation existed, "let her marry," (says Solon,) "whom the laws shall appoint."

A stranger who married with an Athenian girl, however the parties might be drawn together by affection or mutual interests, was subject to the loss of all his property; and "that no Athenian woman shall marry with a foreigner," was an item in the Athenian code, of religious observance. Nay, more than this, "No heiress was permitted to marry out of her kindred; but was required to resign herself and her fortune to her nearest relative." In fulfilment of this law, its administrators periodically assembled, to inspect such as were "designed for heiress-husbands," with the power of "putting by" those who could not give sufficient credentials of their being fit alliances by blood! The woman who brought her husband a fortune, could claim no separate interest in it, but was to

live on the common stock with the children; and an "heiress's son, when he came to man's estate, was appointed to enjoy her fortune, and to support her."

A woman, moreover, could not claim her jointure, if she was childless; while her actions and conduct were amenable to the state, even to the most minute details of her private and personal life. The bridal wardrobe of females was limited by law to three robes, and a "few vessels of small value." A married woman could not on any account go out at night, without a lamp or torch being carried before her. She could only travel with as much meat and drink as could be purchased with an obolus, and carried in a small handbasket; nor could an "innocent woman appear in the streets lightly dressed, under the penalty of a thousand drachms." Whatever was her fortune, she could not dispose by will of more than the value of a measure of barley. While the laws otherwise facilitated divorce to the husband, they did not require the proof of frailty on the part of the wife. But if she had a mind to leave her husband, on plea of his misconduct, she was compelled to give in a separation bill to the archon, with her own hand, and not by proxy; an act always odious to the free women of Athens, who were unused to appear in public.

It was thus, that the modest and devoted wife of Alcibiades, maddened by his infidelity, at last sought to avail herself of the law; and, entering a public place for the first time, presented, "with her own hand," her bill of grievances to the archon. But, while in the act of performing the ceremony prescribed by Solon, Alcibiades (haply fresh from one of those shameless orgies which had driven his wife to this public exhibition of her wrongs) suddenly appeared in the solemn assembly, and, seizing her arm, led her home triumphantly. As he passed through the assembled throng, some perhaps smiled; but none dared oppose an act of violence, done to the laws in the person of a woman, by the most popular and profligate citizen of Athens.

While matrimony sat thus easily on the man, conjugal infidelity in the person of the woman was punished by loss of caste, sometimes by slavery, and always by the

stigma of public indignation. The adultress could not sully the temple of the gods with her prayers, nor habit herself in the matron's ornaments.

The domestic comforts of the Greek women were as ill provided for as their social rights. The Greek houses were divided into two dwellings, separated by the baths. The exterior building was for the men. It was airy, luxurious, and magnificent; while the interior, assigned to the women,* was frequently so confined, as to render it difficult for the inhabitants to pass from one wing to another, without the knowledge of their domestic despots.†

In the Greek drama (and the drama has been the mirror of manners of all times), the destiny of the Greek wives, their wrongs and oppressions, are subjects of constant complaint and reproach. The splendid Medea of Euripides ascribes the crimes and misfortunes of her sex to laws, which obliged women to purchase husbands with large fortunes, only to become their slaves and victims.‡ Even, in the best age of Athens, the daughters of persons of distinction were brought up with no other society or instructors than ignorant mothers and corrupt slaves; dress was their sole science, embroidery their sole acquirement, ignorance their portion, and privation their penalty. Of such a system, frailty and perversion were too frequently the natural, and inevitable result. The "innocent woman," the lawful wife, the legitimate mother, married in childhood§ to a man whom she had never seen, and shut up till then, that she might not herself be seen nor heard,‖ was considered but as an irrational and indispensable agent for perpetuating a family.

One dogma only was conveyed to the undeveloped mind of the sex—"to be faithful to their masters;" a command which embraced all the privations of the stoic, and anticipated all the virtues of the Christian: for what was obedience to such a law, but to return good for evil, and service for neglect; to maintain faith to the faithless, to

* Potter, vol. ii. p. 310.

† Aristophanes makes an Athenian wife complain of this grievance—"So strictly we poor women they confine within our chambers, under lock and key; making use of mastiffs, goblins, any thing," &c. &c.

‡ Potter, vol. ii. p. 297.

§ Xenophon, 12, 89. ‖ Xenophon.

offer devotion to the selfish, and love to the unloving! But, when some weak or outraged creature failed in the due exercise of this superhuman insensibility to wrong—when the neglected wife, the bereaved mother, the despised companion, the unregarded household drudge, broke down under her grievances, or, awakening to her wrongs, escaped to the temple or the bath, and, being denied happiness at home, sought pleasure abroad—when she went out by day without the stately habit that marked her class, or by night without the torches that notified her whereabout, then shame and penalty were her portion.

Innocent, however, or offending, injuring or wronged, the low estimate of the sex has been notified to posterity, in the contemptuous language of the finest of the Greek poets, and of the most spiritual of the Greek philosophers: and Euripides and Plato, however elevated their ideas of the capacity of the sex, stand alike accused as the unwearied traducers and unsparing calumniators of their contemporary women.

Although in Athens, as in Sparta, to furnish a legitimate son and citizen to the state was the great object of marriage, and fidelity to their husbands the only high moral virtue exacted from the women, still the grossness of Greek sentiment (a strange solecism in a people so poetical) provided many by-laws in their marital code, at variance with the rigour of their early institutes. Though chastity was the only virtue required of the married woman, yet to borrow a wife was not an unusual event among the men. Alcibiades (who soon became weary of his own wife) is said to have incurred this obligation to Socrates; and the circumstance that the object of his selection was Xantippe, (there is no answering for tastes) may perhaps account for the graceful facility, with which the wisest of philosophers yielded to the prayer of the most licentious of his disciples.

But while the women were thus equally outraged by the love and by the injustice, by the passions and by the neglect of men, they were still, even in the worst days of Athenian corruption, models of domestic virtue. The *ménage* of the virtuous and the wise Ischomachus (for as such he is proclaimed by his admirer, Xenophon) was

held out to contemporary imitation, as the model of domestic excellence, the *beau idéal* of married life.

Socrates, who said so many wise things, while Xantippe accused him of doing so many foolish ones, was indeed wont to observe, that, "as a straggling flock accuses the shepherd, and an unruly or lazy horse convicts his master of neglect, so the careless and neglectful wife reflects upon the husband who has not reared her better."

But Ischomachus did not depend altogether on management; for his wife was evidently simple-minded, obedient, and inapprehensive of evil. He married her, when, in years and in ignorance, she was but a child; and when he asked her, some time after the festival of the nuptials was over, whether she supposed he had married her for love and pleasure,* replied timidly "her mother had given her no other instructions, than to *be faithful to her husband;* that she knew nothing, but was ready to learn any thing he might choose to teach her." Such was the spirit of that admirable and sage discourse, which has been handed down as a matrimonial breviary to posterity; and the scene and circumstances of this classical lecture may easily be conceived, when the well-known manners and customs of the high Athenian citizens are recalled to mind.

The Athenian husband, with his public and professional duties, his duly performed gymnastics, his bath, his supper, and delicious coterie abroad, was forced by one of the laws of Solon not to be too frequently found at home, nor to attend too assiduously the apartments of his wife. It was toward the ninth hour, (the carnival epoch of the day, "that shade of the sun," when after the heat and dust, and fatigue of the city, or gymnasium, the last toilet was made, preparatory to the evening rendezvous), that Ischomachus may be supposed to have sought his wife, fresh from the bath, and breathing its odorous unguents, preparatory to joining a party, to which the messenger from Pericles may have beckoned him. He has still some idle minutes on his hands, and ascends to the apartment,

* "It was long after their nuptials (says Xenophon) that these young women were so tame as to speak to their husbands."

where, as usual, he finds his young and solitary wife, seated haply, at her tapestry-frame, embroidering the border of a tunic, a votive offering for the statue of Juno.

The model of husbands on his entrance, sinks into his reclining chair, that exquisite model of the sedentary luxury of the Ischomachi of the nineteenth century,—and probably presenting his wife with some childish emblematic toy, (such as a statue of Venus* with a tortoise at her feet, the symbol that "woman should never leave her home,") he hems portentously, knits his brow majestically, and then gives out, authoritatively, that discourse from Xenophon and Socrates, one which they have preserved for the benefit of all future wives of all countries. "The mistress of a family, oh, my beloved," said Ischomachus, "ought to resemble the queen of the bees. As the insect remains quietly in the hive, to send out the labouring bee, to store up the materials which they bring back, and to distribute them in due time, so a good housewife should attend to the interior of her habitation, despatch those slaves that are to work abroad, assign tasks to such as she keeps at home, and take under her care the produce of their labours. It is farther her duty to distribute what is wanted for daily use; lest as much might be wasted in a month, as would suffice for the consumption of a year. It is her province to see that the wool of the flocks is manufactured into stuffs, for clothing and other purposes, and that all fruits, dry or moist, are stored away in such a manner that they may not spoil, or take any injury.

"The mistress of a house should also deposit the arms, clothing, and furniture, in the safest and most suitable apartments of the house; she should take care that they are kept clean and in good order, and that after they have been used, they are returned to their appointed places. She ought to pay attention to the sick slaves of both sexes, to reward the industrious, and punish the negligent and the idle, and instruct the ignorant. If, my beloved," (continues Ischomachus) "you add to the careful performance

* The original statue of the domestic Venus was one of the happiest works of Phidias.

of all these domestic duties, fidelity to me and tenderness to your children, you may even make me your servant. You will have no occasion to fear any diminution of my love when you grow old; but, on the contrary, you may confidently expect to secure so much the more regard, the more attention you bestow, jointly with me, on your domestic concerns: for all the comfort and happiness of matrimony, as of human life in general, depend not upon personal attractions, which the good and the bad may alike possess, but on virtues, by which the good alone are distinguished."

Ischomachus ceases, rises with dignity from his chair, salutes his patient and silent auditress with that infantile caress, which places her fair, dull head and little ears in his hand; and, impressing a conjugal kiss on her matron brow, gathers up his rich and perfumed robe, and issues majestically from the Gynæcium. He quickly descends to the outer portico of his dwelling; and before the deserted, solitary young wife has recomposed her thoughts, and got over some little burst of stifling indignation, at thus being for ever lectured, and for ever left, and has resumed her monotonous task at her embroidery frame, the grave husband has thrown off his gravity, and is already in the temple of the graces, in the salon of Aspasia—the circle of frolic nymphs, and an emancipated husband.

There Ischomachus may have found Alcibiades, who had just got rid of his wife, may have embraced Socrates, recently escaped from his Xantippe; while Pericles himself may have demanded his congratulations; for he, too, had obtained his divorce, and the chief of the Athenian people had become the husband of Aspasia, the quondam mistress of many lovers.

Ischomachus, the type of all conjugal wisdom, the moral Ischomachus, has already forgotten his "queen of the bees," in his homage to the queen of the Hetæræ; and he kisses, in token of felicitation, the hem of the hymeneal veil, which now replaces the airy drapery of the ex-high-priestess of the temple of Venus. Aspasia, the most celebrated of the Hetæræ, has become the arbitress

of Greece, the wife of the most powerful of its rulers; affording the most glaring example of the weakness of the wisest, and of the inconsistency of man, when his passions and his reason, his egotism and his institutions, are exposed to collision.

CHAPTER III.

The Women of Sparta. Their Education—according to the Laws of Lycurgus.

To the descendants of Hercules is poetically ascribed the foundation of the free state of Sparta. The physical force of the warrior people is expressed in this their fabled origin; for, having completely reduced the aborigines to subjection, they converted them into slaves. Their earliest institution thus divided their future population into two classes. The first, being trained to war, formed an aristocracy, on which the fate of Sparta depended; the second, or Helots, were predestined to tillage, and to unmitigated personal subjugation.

The Spartan community, then, exhibited the first elements of modern feudality; and the intruding colonists and conquerors governed by that strange political paradox, which is well expressed in an Athenian proverb, declaring that,—"in Sparta liberty, like slavery, knows no bounds." The Spartan population, composed of iron-braced races, organically deficient in physical sensibility, soon became but the second state in Greece for political force, as it ever was the last in intellectual cultivation.

Lycurgus, the most influential of its legislators, one of those great master spirits, which impress the seal of their own genius on the society whose elementary characteristics they embody, Lycurgus, a Spartiate by birth, and a philosopher and stoic by temperament, constructed his

laws to accord with the rude fibre which he had to direct and control. He followed the nature he found, rather than sought to change or improve it by any rule of civil institution. The exposed geographical position of Sparta, and its internal polity, alike contributed to render perpetual warfare a state necessity, as the belligerent character of its people made it a natural vocation. The commonwealth, consequently, was regarded as every thing, the people who composed it, individually as nothing. The state was a metaphysical entity to which all laws were subservient, and to which humanity itself, its affections, and its instincts, were forced to bend; and thus the private happiness of all was demanded or offered, as a necessary sacrifice to the general good of all.

There was no science, no art, no literature, no commerce, in Sparta; there was even no domestic history. The records of its deeds, traced in the blood of its enemies, were committed solely to the tradition of the families who performed, or to the foes who deplored them; but every state in Greece, in lamenting its own disasters and defects, unconsciously registered the story and the triumphs of Lacedemon.

To increase the physical force of the state, though at the expense of its full moral developement, was the stern system by which Sparta rose, flourished, and fell. To raise soldiers, rather than citizens, was the means adopted for its prosperity, under the superintendence of a philosophy, which, with all its obvious exaggeration and mistakes of detail, acknowledged and acted upon a truth (most unaccountably overlooked in modern times), the paramount necessity of a good bodily constitution, as the basis of the citizen's utility, both to the state, and to his family.

To obtain this essential in both sexes, Lycurgus directed his severest enactments; for he was fully aware that the women were, in this respect, as influential on the public weal as the men. The barbaric and unnatural dispensation, which had at first provided for a hardy race of soldiers, by destroying the feeble and ill-thriven infants, was probably soon repealed by nature herself; and humanity and experience must have alike suggested a far wiser and surer plan for securing a healthy progeny, by

attention to the physical developement, even from the birth, of the future mothers of the Spartan heroes.*

But the plague spot of ignorance still impeded these institutes, enacted in behalf of the weaker sex; and Lycurgus, by forcing the laws of nature to bend to his own codes, and by confounding the physical education of the two sexes, made havoc of the sympathies and affections of both. He produced, therefore, a state of society, which, with all its conventional virtues, and its high aspirations, was false to the great end of social combination (the happiness of the individual citizens), and, consequently, was little calculated to promote the progress of true civilisation, and to ensure the permanent prosperity of the people.

The Spartans, the least domestic of all the Greek states, as they were the most formidable abroad, required in their women the masculine qualities of their heroes; and strove to abolish in their bosoms the feelings implanted there by nature. They endeavoured, and that successfully, to quench the characteristic sensibilities of the female in an artificial stoicism; and thus they ensured an unrepining submission to the claims of country—that Moloch abstraction, which set every Lacedemonian's hand against all the world, and raised every foreigner's hand against him.

Superior as was Lycurgus in discovering the value of maternal influence, he failed in drawing from it its finest and best consequences. While he strengthened the bodily structure of the women, he gave a false direction to their minds. If he commanded them to be chaste, he permitted them not to be modest,—not, at least, modest in that lovely sense, which includes personal *pudeur*, and the self-respect which has a deep moral feeling of propriety for its accompaniment. True it is, he gave them great qualities; but he stripped them of all feminine graces.

Such, however, as the Spartan women were, such as

* "Lycurgus (says Plutarch) considered the education of youth as the most important object of legislation, and provided from the beginning for all that concerned the births and marriages of the Spartan citizens. Of the women he took the greatest care; and while they were yet children, he sought to harden their constitutions, by exercising their frames in wrestling, throwing quoits, flinging javelins, and other exercises; so that they might thus become robust mothers, able to produce a hardy and vigorous offspring."

nature and Lycurgus had made them, they appear to have been long considered as the noblest, the most virtuous, and the most respected women, of Greece.*

The education of the Spartan child began before its birth. The health and spirits of the young mother were objects of national concern, even before she was entitled to that noble and touching epithet.† The infant nursling and pupil, committed (during its first years, to her sole care), was freed from galling restraints. Its delicate limbs were neither confined, nor tortured; and its tears flowed and its smiles beamed in the unrestrained expression of its pleasures and its pains: no images of terror (the agency of vulgar ignorance) were conjured up to scare its senses; no fear of darkness nor dread of solitude; no associations of falsehood with truth; no seeds of personal despotism, nor moral servility to error, were prescribed by the law.‡

The female children, (unlike those of the citizens of Athens) were not prisoners in their father's houses,§ their young and healthy energies were not subdued by the cramping restraints of the embroidery frame, nor exhausted in the unwholesome atmosphere of a confined apartment. They were taught to dance, to sing, to run, as accomplishments favourable to the developement of their beautiful forms, and conducive to the brilliancy of their healthful spirits. Constitutions thus founded, were preserved in after-life from the premature fatigues of motherhood, by the laws which tended to discourage very early marriages, (so liable to produce degenerate races,) and which denied, to the petulance of passion, that sober state which was considered to be the reward only of a rational and mature choice. In addition to the qualities of strong minds,‖ the law required in the young spouses, strength of body, beauty, and health;—for Lycurgus evi-

* Anacharsis, vol. iv. p. 182. † Plutarch. ‡ Plutarch in Lycurg.

§ "Nulle part, les femmes ne sont moins surveillées, et moins contraintes, nulle part elles n'ont moins abusé de la liberté."—*Anacharsis, Aristot. de Rep.*

‖ Devenues mères, elles sont chargées de la longue education de eurs enfans, d'abord avec leurs epoux, ensuite avec les magistrats.—*Anacharsis.*

dently thought that while so much science was displayed in perfecting the race of domestic animals, the progeny of man should not be neglected. The result was, the purity of the Spartan blood, the strengh and stature of one sex, the symmetry and beauty of the other.

To the irrevocable bond of matrimony was given the potent charm of concealed love;* and passion, thus long perpetuated by obstacles, was said slowly and imperceptibly to have dropped its illusions; almost insensible to the change by which love strengthened into friendship. In man, celibacy was deemed more than a crime; it was considered a ridicule: even when sufficient reasons were given to the state for the adoption of unblessed singleness, the bachelor, in his old age, could lay no claims to that respect, which the married man in his senility expected and received. When Dercyllidas, an unmarried general, who had commanded in the army with signal glory, presented himself in the public assembly, "I cannot rise to receive you," said a youthful husband to him as he passed, "because you will leave no children behind you, to pay me the same respect, when I attain to your age."

The beauty of the Spartan women is described as being of that severe character, which might have furnished the bold chisel of Phidias with models for his favourite Minerva, rather than the graceful genius of Praxiteles with a type for his Venus. They appeared unveiled in public, till they became wives; and if their drapery was not always folded by the fingers of cloistral prudery, the delicacy, sacrificed by the false laws of their legislator, was said to have been replaced by that higher modesty, which rendered the feelings of the Spartan women as inviolable as their chastity. It was death by the law of the land to violate the one,† it was shame by the law of opinion to insult the other; and death and shame in the stoical ethics of Sparta were synonymous terms.

Notwithstanding all the legislative errors of Lycurgus,

* It was not rare for young couples to have children before the husband had publicly visited his wife.

† Xenophon du Repub. Lacedem. p. 676. Plutarch in Lyc.

the women of Sparta were raised to an equality with the men; and, during the brighter days of the republic, they were cited through Greece for the purity of their lives. They were as simple in their costume, as the Athenian women were the reverse;* but Plato went beyond Lycurgus, in his Utopian ideas of the moral modesty of his ideal women; for he determined that in his republic (to make use of the elegant translation of a modern classic) "les femmes de tout âge s'exercassent dans le gymnase, n'ayant que leurs vertus pour tous vêtemens."†

The laws of Sparta, as referable to women, were the most favourable to her natural rights, of any legislation throughout the Grecian states. The love of country and of liberty, and a sense of honour, such as in modern times would have been called "*chivalresque*," distinguished the Spartan women, even to extravagance; and raised them not only in the public esteem, but to (what was perhaps more precious to them,) the confidence of their husbands, who consulted with them on all public as well as on all domestic affairs.

The bravest, boldest, sternest men in Greece were said to be the most faithful of husbands; and the poetical union of Mars and Venus was justified by the mutual devotion which subsisted between the Spartan wife and her warrior lord. Cowards only are the unnatural enemies of woman; and the man who pursues her with private calumny, or public hate, is, if all were known, but one of nature's monsters! "How comes it," lisped a pretty fine lady to the wife of Leonidas, "that you Spartan women are the only wives who have some ascendancy over your men?" "Because," replied the proud wife of the greatest hero of his day, "we are the only women who know how to bring forth men."

In the best days of Sparta, though nature was made submissive to patriotism, the sacrifice was not unrewarded. The Ephori conferred signal honours on the mother of the

* Meurs. Miscell. Lacon. lib. 2. cap. 3.

† Plutarch de Rep. Offensive as this is to modern susceptibility, and as it should have been to that of all civilised people, it was probably less strikingly shocking to the Greek stranger, not "to the manner born," than the half measures adopted into the code of modern operatic modesty, to greet the eyes of the female spectator.

celebrated Brasidas, who, (when some Thracians brought her the account of her son's glorious death, generously adding that never had Sparta produced so great a general,) replied, "Stranger, my son was a brave man; but know that Sparta boasts citizens still braver than him."*

Deprived of all worldly sources of competition, by institutions which forbid the vain distinctions of birth, fortune, dress, and ornaments, or even the more ennobling advantages of wit and poetry, which made the glory of the Leontiums and the Aspasias,—the Spartan women were obliged to seek super-eminence from the superior number, the worth, and valour of their children, or the devotedness of their own patriotism.

In the latter days of Sparta's declining greatness, the women partook of the comparative degeneracy of the men; the exaggeration of public spirit succeeded to its reality; and their genuine devotion† to country was exchanged for an idea of abstract patriotism, that absorbed all rational motives of conduct, and extinguished almost all natural feelings. But they fell by the fundamental error of their laws, more than by the imperfection of their nature. To the last, the remains of their virtues, like the fragments of a noble ruin, attested their original grandeur; and their faults, like their merits, were free from all littleness. Extravagant in their stoicism, they were still inaccessible to meanness: though buoyed up by a desire for false glory, they were proud without vanity, and ambitious without intrigue; and they rose and fell with their country, by the same virtues and the same defects as the men.

Of the women of Greece in general, during its glorious classical antiquity, it may be affirmed that they displayed every endowment by which humanity is honoured, graced, or ennobled; and if the intention of nature in their behalf was frequently frustrated, and their endowments perverted or degraded, law, and law only, was in fault. Wherever they were permitted to exercise the faculties given to them, they were not found wanting. Intelligent, prudent,

* Anacharsis, vol. iv. p. 231.

† Elles ont une haute idée de l'honneur et de la liberté. Elles la poussent quelquefois si loin, qu'on ne sait alors quel nom donner aux sentimens qui les animent."—*Anacharsis.*

enduring, sagacious, brave, or patriotic, according to the institutes under which they lived, they justified the evidence given in their favour by the brightest of their philosophers and purest of their compatriots. Had every other item in the code of Plato's republic been founded in principles equally true to nature and to her unerring philosophy, as those which concerned women, the name of his Utopia had not now passed into a proverb of legislative ideality.

The history of Greece, the most intellectual of all histories, furnishes, beyond every other record of the species, proofs of the power of adaptation inherent in the highly moral organization of woman. The faithful and enduring wife of Athens, the gifted and accomplished Hetæra of Ionia, the citizen-patriot and devoted mother of Sparta, contributed, each in her separate way, to the triumph of a great legislative experiment;—an experiment not always, indeed, favourable to the interests of the many, (as it was frequently based in the egotism of the few,) but evincing in its success the possible combination of qualities, vulgarly deemed incompatible in the female character, and their co-operation to the highest purposes of a beneficent philosophy and a wise legislation.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

The Women of Italy. Before the Romans. Under the Roman Republic.

THE vestiges of some great physical revolution in the Peninsula of Italy have accredited the hypothesis that Sicily, originally part of the main land, was separated from the continent by that concussion. Whatever were the races which then inhabited the main land, (if, indeed, this event did not precede the appearance of man in the region,) they must have been driven by the inundation which accompanied it, to those cloud-capped mountains that rose above the world of waters, raging at their base.*

Without, however, recurring to such an hypothesis, there are sufficient evidences that the plains of Italy, such as they now exist, have been the creations of a comparatively recent date; and that at an epoch not very remote from the dawning of traditional history, the soil must have remained too loaded with water and unconsolidated, to admit of cultivation, or to form a healthy abode for the human animal. There seems good reason, therefore, for believing that the so-called aborigines were a rude and simple race, ignorant of agriculture and the arts, and scattered with their flocks through the ravines of the Appenines.†

When the settling of the elements, the progressive elevation of the soil, and the sinking of the waters, had changed the face of nature, a region was opened to the

* Michale, L'Italia avante i Romani. Dolomieu, La Sicile Antique.

† "Genus hominum agreste, sine legibus, sine imperio, liberum atque solutum."—*Sallust, cited by Michale.*

Alpine colonists, the most beautiful and fertile that imagination can portray. A paradise, in all the freshness of creation, must have burst upon the delighted senses; promising a prompt reward to labour, and hastening the progress of a precocious civilisation.

In the task of social developement, the natives of the soil were not abandoned to their own resources. Seated upon the most beautiful of seas, looking from their lovely shores upon the coasts of Africa and Asia Minor, with Egypt the policized, Phœnicia the lettered, and Tyre the enterprising, opposite to them, the Italians, in all likelihood, maintained intercourse with these populations, even before the supposed colonies arrived, to dispute in the first instance with them the soil, and afterwards to bestow upon them, in a political and social union, the arts, and the instruction of their own native lands.*

In times more nearly approaching to the certainty of history, the Greek colonies came, hiving like bees, on the flowery shores of the Mediterranean, ennobling them with the name of Magna-Grecia, and bringing a preponderating moral influence to bear upon the crude political institutions of early Italy. On the other hand, Italy was exposed, from the side of the Alps, to the invasions of whatever nations may have possessed, or wandered over, the immense forests of northern Europe: of these, the Gauls have left the strongest traces of their presence in the traditions of the country.† It cannot, however, be imagined that civilisation derived much from such a source.

Michale, not without good ground, attributes the early

* Michale doubts this eastern colonization, and considers the Greeks as the earliest settlers: but his own mode of reasoning from the nature of things, favours the supposition, that if any communication subsisted between Italy and Asia Minor, &c. navigation must have passed from the most polished to the rudest shores, and not *vice versa*. It is further clear, that the gigantic and massy architecture called Cyclopean, of which such early traces are found in Italy, was not indigenous, but of Eastern origin.

† It is singular that, though this is the case, the language of Rome proves, beyond all possibility of dispute, that tribes of a Teutonic origin must have obtained a more durable seat in Italy. In the Latin language, nearly the whole, which is not of Greek origin, is said, on good authority, to be derived from a common source with the German and Saxon tongues.

constitution of the Italian population in small and independent communities, to the same cause which to this day has impeded the formation of a feeling of Italian nationality—the geographical aspect of a soil, broken up by mountain chains, and divided by large and frequent rivers: and it is most probable that the occasional invasions from the north, of stranger populations, must have contributed to knit and strengthen such federal unions, wherever they prevailed.

But the early Greek adventurers, also, who settled in Italy, were exiles from republican states; and their hatred of tyranny, whatever might be its denomination, may have added its influence, in giving a character to the free and independent cities which they joined. The Sabines, Latins, Rutili, Equi, Volsci, and other little states (resembling the Lilliputian dukeries of modern Italy) were thus congregated in frequent alliance; and Etruria, (superior to all, the Athens of ancient Italy,) was distinguished by an intimacy and permanency of its federal associations, which gave it almost an air of distinct nationality.

The condition of the Etruscan women was among the social and political miracles of Italy before the Romans. Called upon for equal labour and equal endurance with the men, they enjoyed almost equal rights. Their high estimation may be collected from the one fact, that they were admitted to all social meetings, public and private. In the representations of their solemn national festivals, the women are depicted reclining on the same couch with their husbands, and under the same covering, round the festive table. The tutulus,* a national head-dress, adopted by the Etruscan matrons, was, doubtless, regarded as a token of high distinction; for Italy herself, in her majesty, is found symbolized in the proudest works of art, diademed with that pyramidical ornament, which was exclusively dedicated in those early ages to crown the mothers of the country.†

* "Matresfamilias crines convolutos ad verticem capitis quos habent uti velatos, dicent tutelos."—*Varro de Lingua Latina.*

† There is a fragment still extant, representing an Etruscan woman in her flowing tunic, her brow diademed, her feet sandaled, the whole figure bearing a strict resemblance to the Minerva of the Parthenon. Another

Marriage among this people was a ceremony surrounded with much pomp; and another great mark of the consideration in which the females were held, was the custom uniformly adopted of adding the mother's name to the designation of the son, an acknowledgment of woman's claim as the foundress of families—a claim beyond all the cavils of scepticism to deny. The elevated social position of the sex is, perhaps, further marked by the exquisite beauty and lofty bearing of the female figures, universal on the monumental records of the public and domestic ceremonies of the people. Regular features, high foreheads, well developed forms, and graceful attitudes, give assurance of a physiological excellence; while a spiritual expression of countenance, betokens a corresponding superiority of intellect.* Those families which could boast a succession of eminent mothers, were held in the highest veneration; an evidence of the confidence placed in the virtue of the sex, which, if we are to believe Roman authorities, must, in the latter ages, have survived the primitive purity of manners, which caused it.†

These, indeed, may be but faint and unsatisfactory evidences of the state of women in Etruria; but they are all that can be discovered concerning a people known only through fragmentary traditions, and the pictorial monuments which time has spared. Enough, however, exists to mark the superiority of the nation, over their rude and semi-barbarous neighbours—to authenticate the refinement of their manners—and to attest their possession of that

of these monuments is cited by Michale, full of moral beauty. It represents the death-bed of an Etruscan matron, surrounded by her husband and children; and exhibits, in its action, the best affections and highest duties that have ennobled the sex in all ages.

* "Le femmine d'Etruria avevano l'invidiabile pregio d'essere reputate sommamente belle."—*Michale.*

† "Non te Penelopen difficilem procris
Tyrrhenus genuit parens."
HORAT.

This is an accusation generally brought by the less refined communities against the more civilized. As coming, too, from a political enemy, such a statement is not to be very literally taken. The Romans, forming their women to a servile submission, and founding female innocence upon ignorance, not unnaturally looked with suspicion on a more liberal system. In the same spirit, the English public are scandalized at the intellectual superiority of French women, and are unjust to their virtues.

sensibility of temperament, which is most favourable to female influence.

Etruria was still the centre of Italian civilisation, the main pivot of its political combinations, and extended its influence from the Alps to the shores of Calabria, at the period, when a band of reckless fugitives, (congregated by common wants and common crimes, and derived, probably, from various Teutonic tribes, which had migrated into Italy by the Tyrol,) halted, and fixed themselves on one of the seven hills of the future Rome.* The Palatine was then covered with wood, and surrounded by the stagnant waters of the Tibur. It had long been abandoned to neglect and desolation, and afforded an appropriate site for the encampment of a destitute and predatory multitude,

"Di nido e di difesa di gente ribalda."

Such were the founders of "the eternal city," the masters of the future destinies of mankind, whose influence and whose tenets may still be traced in the spirit of existing civilisation, rendering its laws arbitrary and harsh, and embittering its religion. For if the modern world owes to Greece its arts, its science, and its philosophy, it stands indebted to Rome for much of its jurisprudence, and for its church; and *il latte della Lupa*† is still found circulating its energizing vitality through the institutions of both.

Scarcely had the northern savages hived among the clustering hills of Latium, and directed too successfully their brute force against the comparative civilisation of their neighbours and victims, when they found the necessity of imposing some restraints on their own ferocious passions, of seeking protection against themselves, in such rude laws as nature itself suggests, or in a wholesale imi-

* Michale says "a troop of shepherds and fugitive slaves:" but the language of Rome determines the origin of the people to have been Teutonic; and thence it may be inferred that they were the remnant of some migratory body, conquered in battle, or reduced by starvation, to fix themselves in a wild and uncultivated part of the country, away from the natives and inhabitants.

† "Il latte della lupa si perpetuo nelle vene de' Romani, ne quindi conobbero mai i sentimenti di sociabilità, i piaceri della società, le regole che all'adempimento di essi prescrive la natura."—*Delfico, Richerche sul vero carattere della Giurisprud. Romana.*

tation of whatever they could comprehend in the polity of the Etrurians.*

But however rude the outline of their political legislation, the domestic despotism incidental to all savage populations had firmly traced its brief but arbitrary and comprehensive code, for the government of the interior establishments of Rome. It is in the very nature of things that this antithesis should subsist; since the woman and the child have no where to look for protection for their physical weakness against the passions of the man, save in the paramount authority of a constituted public body. Wherever that authority exists not, or is silent, the father and the husband exert a right of life and death over their subject family; and that, for the simplest of all reasons, because they have the power.

Romulus, whether a mythic or an historic personage, is generally considered as representing the first who constituted the robber band a political community, by engrafting on his own superiority of captainship, some portions of the more liberal institutions, which he found in practice in the surrounding cities: but it was Numa Pompilius who filled out his meagre outline:—establishing a civil rule, curbing the fierce volitions of the soldier population through their superstitious fears, and providing for the possibility of those occasional truces, which were then all that was known of a state of peace.

But, in thus conciliating the conflicting interests of a nascent society, what god or demon did this almost inspired pagan implore? what synod of men, practically experienced in the passions and the weakness of the species, did he consult? Not one. The originator of Roman civilisation, in order to stamp his code with authority, and to ensure the submission of his people, declared that he had derived his wisdom from a nymph—a female spirit—the assumed impersonation, probably, of those images of feminine beauty and intellectual majesty, with which Etruscan art might have brought his subjects acquainted.

* L'importanza delle leggi, cioè di un vincolo proprio a ritener gli nomini, ne sentimenti d'umanità, ed a confermare i loro diritti, stabilendone i doveri, fu un sentimento che precede la stessa formazione de' corpi sociali, un sentimento univoco della specie umana, e ripetuto dovunque essa pote formare delle associazioni.—*Giurcsprudenza Romana.*

It was from Egeria (he asserted) that he had derived his code, during conversations carried on in that solitary and secluded grotto, to which the pilgrim feet of modern wanderers are still turned with reverential steps. It was by the inspiration (he said) of this female intelligence, that he was directed; and the hitherto indocile and ferocious people saw no incongruity in the circumstance. It was Egeria who commanded them to fear the gods, and to obey the law; and, accustomed as they were to tyrannise over their females at home, they must have still acknowledged the divinity of woman's spirit; for they implicitly followed her counsel. The college of pontiffs presided by its sovereign pontiff, then established under female influence, (six hundred and seventy years before the birth of Him, "the servant of whose servants" still bears that sacred title,) is to this day shadowed in the sacred College of Cardinals; and the vestals, priests, and augurs of Numa and of Egeria, constitute the machinery by which the church still serves and rules the state.

Numa Pompilius was a moral man, had been a married man, and had retired to sylvan scenery and rural seclusion, that he might devote his days to the study of religion and of law. Who, then, was Egeria? Was the goddess of his inspiration a reflection of the wife of his bosom, an impersonation of feelings and thoughts which had grown up during his intercourse with a mortal woman, and while he was in intellectual communion with a mind, to which sex had imparted an instinctive perspicacity, and an intuitive grasp?

But, nymph or woman, a fabulous or a real personage, it is curious to remark that, while her influence was effective in subjecting the will of a barbarous race, and changing, as it were, the very nature of a people, the condition of the sex was either wholly neglected, or noticed only for the purpose of a cruel oppression. Amidst the progress of civilisation, the gradual enlargement of the dominion of law, and some improvements in the political constitution, favourable to the happiness of the citizens at large, every new enactment tended to rivet more closely the galling chain, which the primitive barbarism of man had wound round the women of Rome. From Servius to Justinian (the father of modern jurisprudence), no male legislator

sought a repeal of the early laws against the rights and liberties of the sex: they rather desired to abrogate the little that had been provided for its protection.

The Roman law, however, (differing in this respect less from the equality of nature, than the code of the Jews, or that of the Athenians,) sanctioned not the privilege of primogeniture; but in the inheritance of property, placed both sexes on the same level. But even this solitary right, (confined in its enjoyment to the single alone; for the property of a married woman was, from the hour of her union, absorbed into that of her husband), did not fail to excite the jealousy of the men, as soon as the increasing wealth of the nation converted the privilege into a power. At the expiration of six hundred years, the Voconian law* took from the women their right of inheritance, and that, too, during the brightest epoch of female virtue, and of female influence. The younger Scipio seized on this occasion for exercising his generosity towards his mother and sister; and what these august women should have received at the hand of justice, they were glad to accept as a benevolence from the free-will offering of affection. The immediate motive of this law was an apprehension, lest the independence of the women should transfer the wealth of the aristocratic families into the new lines: for the Roman law, like that of the Jews, favoured the inalienable descent, both of property, and of religious power, in a few privileged families.

The absolute dominion of the Roman father over his children, like that over his slaves, was adopted among the first attempts at legislation; and the wife being considered but as a child or servant of her husband and master, she was, by a strange legal fiction, converted into the sister of her own children, and the daughter of her own husband. By his sole judgment, or caprice, the wife was approved or censured, acquitted or chastised. In cases of adultery or inebriety (the vices of his own habitual practice), a sen-

* This law, in abolishing the natural right of inheritance, restricted all the legacies in favour of a woman, to the sum of one hundred thousand sesterces. An only daughter was considered almost as an alien in her father's house; and where the law was directly silent, the artifices of legal subtlety were resorted to, as stumbling-blocks in the way of probity and equity.

tence of death might be "properly inflicted" by her husband, at once her judge, her jury, her accuser, and her executioner. "Woman," said the law, "can acquire or inherit only for the profit of her lord;" and so clearly was she regarded, in Roman jurisprudence, as a thing, that, in case of any defect in her legal title to the rank of married woman, she might be reclaimed, like other movables, on proof of use and possession during one entire year.

Such was the condition of the Roman matron, the *mater familias* of the poetical illusions of classical posterity. It was in vain that, from the earliest times, the Roman women had merited a better reward, by the services they had rendered to their country. They had, indeed, been amused with the institution of an annual festival, the matronalia, in commemoration of the reconcilement they had effected between the Romans and the Sabines, thereby saving the infant state from destruction. They were suffered, too, to erect an equestrian statue to the honour of the valorous Clelia, and to build a temple to "Female Fortune," in recollection of the mediation of the mother and wife of Coriolanus. Their patriotism was acknowledged, when, to satisfy the rapacity of the Gauls, they spontaneously surrendered their jewels and money; and again, when in the most urgent difficulties of the Punic wars, they made a similar sacrifice to the exhausted exchequer of the state. Still no savage law against their lives and liberties was repealed; so that, after having acted under the pressure of circumstances, with the wisdom of the sage, and the devotedness of the patriot, they nevertheless remained, according to the ancient law, slaves and things.*

These laws, thus marked by violence and by ignorance, are to this very day not wholly uninfluential in determining the condition of the women of modern Europe; for, notwithstanding all that Tacitus has said of the independence and authority of the sex among the Germans, and all that has been boasted of the chivalric gallantry of their descendants, the spirit, if not the letter, of the Roman law

* "Women were condemned to the perpetual tutelage of parents, husbands, or guardians; a sex created to please and obey, was never supposed to have obtained the age of reason and experience. Such, at least, was the stern and haughty spirit of the ancient law, which was insensibly mollified before the time of Justinian."—*Gibbon*, vol. viii. p. 70.

has prevailed; and the married woman is still indebted for pecuniary rights, to an evasion, as awkward and cumbrous, as it is paltry and degrading.

Nature, however, that great repealer of man's legal injustice, was not slow to throw into partial abeyance dispensations thus contradictory to her behests; and woman, stripped as she was of her natural rights, never exerted a more marked influence than at the time when young Rome secured for its virtues a respect, which was not afterwards paid to it in its proudest hour of universal dominion.

It was in the days of the Lucretias, the Virginias, and the Volumnias, when the fortunes of the republic were turned most readily by the intervention and the sanctity of the sex, that Rome was the most redoubtable; and if suicide, the immolation of a daughter, and the fortunate feebleness of Coriolanus, were circumstances in themselves of but equivocal character, they indicate, at worst, a barbarous, and not a corrupt state of society. But however the Christian moralist may regard these events, they establish, beyond the power of cavil, the moral importance of the sex to the state; and prove that their unblemished virtue made a part of the national honour, that an outrage upon it provoked revolutions subversive of despotism, which a more comprehensive and systematic violence in other quarters could not determine.

It was in the period of Rome's earliest legislation, that woman, the slave, the thing, was most effectually employed in all the subtile agency of mind. The Sibyl, with her nine books, imaged the genius and the pertinacity of the female organization; but the vestal priestess assumed a higher authority over the credulity of mankind, than man himself had ever exercised. The priest and the augur had no power comparable with hers, before whose supremacy the highest magistrates of the republic bowed their insignia. To her was committed the highest prerogative of mercy, a power above that of law; for when the law condemned, the bare presence of the vestal sufficed to pardon and to save.

Even the dreadful penalty annexed to the violation of the vestal's vow, proves, by its inhuman severity, the confidence reposed in her virtue: for it was not in human nature, depraved and hardened as it may have been by

bigotry and superstition, to have enacted such a punishment, in the belief that it would be often inflicted. The vestal's evidence in trials was also received without the formality of an oath; and she was chosen as arbiter in legal disputes of much moment—a deference at once to her probity, and to the acuteness of her subtle intelligence.

Progressing civilisation, however, while it increased the influence of females, had a contrary effect on the few advantages which the laws of the more ancient times had assigned them. The Oppian law prohibited women from using carriages in the city, and from wearing purple robes, or any golden ornaments weighing more than half an ounce. The pretext was the exigency of the state, and the women appear to have submitted cheerfully to the sacrifice.

But after the victorious termination of the war, when the women sought a repeal of this law of circumstance, and a return to ancient usage, the conservatives of Rome took the alarm, and saw nothing less than danger to church and state, in an unprecedented irruption of female emancipators. Cato, the censor, stern, cold, and despotic, placed himself at the head of the husbandism and egoistical celibacy of Rome; (and on hearing, on the day appointed for the discussion, that every avenue of the forum was crowded with the ladies of the city, soliciting the senators and tribunes as they passed for "their most sweet voices") he went down to the house, to oppose redress, and to declare for the finality of a measure, which had his entire approbation.

He spoke on the wisdom of the Oppian law, as one who had never known what it was to have a wife, or rather, perhaps, as one who did know what it was to have one, that had proved *too much* for him. He censured the conduct of the women as a frightful and perilous innovation on the necessary and wholesome custom of female restriction. He describes the conduct of the Roman women, and the attempt to repeal the law, as a fatal overthrow of ancient order and decorum, as rebellion against their master-husbands—against law, government, and religion.

"He considered," he said, "their claiming rights, and assuming a voice in public affairs, to be an irrefragable proof that the men had *lost their majesty*, and abdicated their supreme authority—that absolute authority over the

weaker sex, which their ancestors had established by so many wise laws; for," (continued the severe and eloquent, and, haply, henpecked leader of the conservatives, addressing the Senate), "if each master of a family, emulating the example of his progenitors, had kept his wife in due submission at home, we should not now have so much to apprehend from the public disobedience of the congregated sex."*

The Oppian law, however, was repealed; the arrangement supported by Cato, the censor, was determined not to be final; and when the triumph of the women, supported by all the numerous party of the day, was pronounced, there was, doubtless, *grande hilarité* on one side of the house, while on the other, dejection murmured the awful prophecy, that all virtue in woman would be henceforth but a name. Cornelia, Aurelia, and Attica, proved the falsehood of the prophecy.

The repeal of the Oppian law was followed by an attempt, on the part of the matrons, for other repeals; and they aspired to the common benefits of a free and opulent republic, in spite of the abusive epithet of Androgyne (the he woman), bestowed upon such women as had pleaded their own causes before the tribunal.†

The women of Rome at this reforming epoch went further still—they strove to command the use and secure their right to their private fortunes: to protect their estates against alienation, through the extravagance and vices of a prodigal husband, and to establish the freedom of the marriage contract; extending it even to the unpre-

* The "gravity of Cato" in this instance is too solemnly ridiculous, not to give a specimen of it, with all the benefit of Livy's original. "Si in suâ quisque nostrum matrefamilias, Quirites, jus et majestatem viri retinere instituisset, minus cum universis fœminis negotii haberemus. Nunc domi victa libertas nostra, impotentia muliebri, hic quoque in Foro obteritur et calcatur: et quia singulas sustinere non potuimus, universas horremus .... Quod nisi me verecundia singularum magis majestatis et pudoris, quam universarum tenuisset, ne compellatæ a Consule viderentur, dixissem. Qui hic mos est in publicum procurrendi et obsidendi vias, et viros alienos appelandi? Istud ipsum suos quæque domi rogare non potuistis? an blandiores in publico quam in privato, et alienis quam vestris estis?" &c.—*Liv. Hist.* l. xxxiv.

† When the first Roman woman undertook her own defence before a tribunal, the Senate was so astounded by a spirit so unprecedented, that they solemnly implored the gods to reveal the nature of the omen.—*Plutarch.*

cedented right of their being allowed to seek a divorce, upon proof of ill usage or other disagreements. Hitherto the domestic lord and judge might pronounce the death of his wife, and he might divorce her by expelling her his house and bed; but the slavery of the wretched female was hopeless and perpetual, unless he asserted, for his own convenience, the manly prerogative of a divorce. The warmest applause has been lavished on the virtue of the Romans, who had abstained from the exercise of this tempting privilege above five hundred* years; but the fact may not have been unconnected with the unequal terms of a connexion, "in which the slave was unable to renounce her tyrant, when the tyrant was unwilling to relinquish his slave." Cato the censor was again indignant at the bold proceedings of the women, and shocked that the Roman matron should presume to consider herself as a voluntary companion of her lord and master, and should propose that the marriage contract might be dissolved by either parties alike, on their respective complaints, and proofs of incompatibility.

The women further complained of the rudeness of the primitive forms of Roman nuptials: they remonstrated against being purchased from their parents, and yet buying their prerogative of entering the bridegroom's house with "three pieces of copper." The being seated with him on the same sheepskin, and eating with him the same salt-cake, were, it was true, simple symbols of the mystic union of marriage; but they were symbols of a union "rigorous and unequal,"† a new servitude, differing little from that in which they lived in their father's house, though decorated with the futile title of adoption.

But Cato resisted and vituperated in vain. The women

* At the close of the sixth century, a Roman citizen first ventured to recur to the law of divorce, and to put away his wife: this was Spurius Carvilius, who parted with his wife, not for her frailty, but her sterility. Spurius had the law on his side, but public opinion was against him: the marriage vow was, in the conviction of the citizens, irrevocable; and the legal, but immoral act of Spurius, drew upon him the contempt of his fellow-citizens of one sex, and the indignant resentment of the other.

† "If (says the elder Cato), you surprised your wife in adultery, you may kill her without trial—but if she surprises you in the fact, the law will not permit her to touch you, not even with the tip of her finger." "*Si adulterares, digito non auderet contingere: neque jus est.*"—*Apud Aul. Gellium*, L. x. C. 23.

carried the sense, or the passions of society along with them.* A new jurisprudence was introduced, in which the rights of women were more duly considered; in which marriage, like other partnerships, was pronounced to be dissolvable "by the abdication of either of the associates;" and the women, without losing their name or independence, "were permitted to prescribe the liberal and definite terms of their own marriage contract." The expediency of the concessions thus made to justice and to nature, was fully proved by the virtues and the intellect of the Roman women, at an epoch when domestic civilisation, foreign conquest, wealth, power, and independence, covered republican Rome with a brighter halo of national glory, than ever glorified so young a nation, or ever perhaps consummated the grandeur of an ancient one.

The Romans, who in their stoical temperaments and early institutions resembled the Spartan more than any other of the Greek states, looked much to the physiological excellence of their women, for the strength and perfection of their race; and it had passed into an axiom, that "the strongest bodies owed their vigour to the very milk with which they were nurtured in their infancy." The Roman youth continued in Rome's last days to be the disciples of their mothers, long after the first eight years had elapsed, (the prescribed period of their tuition in the paternal house:) and even after the toga virilis had been drawn over their manly shoulders, they were found to loiter in their mother's circles.

The Gracchi (says Cicero) were under the immediate tuition of their mothers;† and women of the highest rank (for such were Cornelia, Attica, and Aurelia,) not only presided over the education of their sons, but undertook the responsible situation of governesses to such patrician children as were destined by their birth and by parental ambition to hold high offices in the state.

Oratory, the talent most called for in the political market of Rome, was considered to owe much of its pre-

* "The ancient worship of the Romans afforded a peculiar goddess to hear and reconcile the complaints of married life; but her epithet of *viriplaca*, the appeaser of husbands, too clearly indicates on which side submission and repentance were always expected."—*Gibbon.*

† Non tam in gremio quam in sermone matris.

valence, its charm, and its influence, to the natural eloquence of the mothers, from whose lips the greatest orators had sucked in the first elements of the art of persuasion. In the opinion of Cicero, Caius Curio, the third great orator of his age, owed his brilliant and fluent eloquence, so peculiarly feminine, to the enlightened conversation of his mother's interior. "The reputation of Curio" (he says) "was founded on his clear, shining phraseology, his promptness, quickness, and facility of expression. These perfections he attained by the correct and polished conversations of the home in which he was brought up." The eloquence of the glorious elder son of Cornelia, Tiberius Gracchus, was mild, persuasive, full of feeling and finesse, addressed to the passions, and frequently reaching to the sublime of terror, through the deepest pathos. It was mother-eloquence—the eloquence he had imbibed with the first impressions he received from a mother's endearing accents.

Cicero, dwelling, in his delightful garrulity, on the circumstances of his own early education, relates of himself and of Atticus, that in their boyish days they were wont, according to the system of education of those times, to act the pleading of causes before judges, (as the younger Cato did,) and to recite the laws of the twelve tables, as though it were an agreeable form; adding that the accomplished Attica presided over their exercises of eloquence and memory, and at once stimulated and recompensed their efforts.* "From such early advantages," observes Quinctilian, "many persons of ordinary capacities attained to renown in the forum; even men deficient in other eminent qualifications."

But the influence which female intellect exercised over the interests of society, through education, was not confined to the patrician dames of the most illustrious families of Rome. Even the lowliest quarters of Rome had their plebeian Cornelia, some matron of humble life, with superior intellectual endowments, to whom the education of

* The respect which the pupils of these accomplished mothers maintained for the sex, is beautifully illustrated by the reverence which Atticus preserved for the memory of his wife Regilla, to whom he dedicated a theatre, scarcely to be paralleled in the empire: no wood, except cedar curiously carved, was employed in any part of the building.

the youth of the quarter was consigned. "Before this matron," says Quinctilian, "it was deemed an heinous offence to speak or to act ill." She not only taught the youths, but prepared them for the business which they were to follow; she regulated their recreation, and watched over their morals. Boys very generally love female instructresses, but the reverence and the love which the Roman mothers, at this period, inspired in the hearts of their sons and pupils, justified the words of Juvenal, that they were

"As parents honoured, and as gods obeyed."

The life of Cornelia, the daughter of Scipio Africanus, the wife of Sempronius Gracchus, and the mother of his two immortal sons of that name, would alone suffice to establish the intellectual and moral endowments of the women of the Roman republic, and their worthiness to claim and to possess the rights of citizenship, as nobly performing its duties. Tiberius and Caius Gracchus owed the virtues and the powers by which they were enabled to illustrate their unknown, though patrician name, to the temperament and to the precepts of their mother. Cornelia has been accused of having applied too much stimulus to the fierce and kindling genius of her sons. Her frequent reproach to them, "Shall I, then, only be honoured as the mother-in-law of Scipio, when I desire the still greater title of the mother of the Gracchi?" was thought to imply a higher and less justifiable ambition than that of maternal gratification. But her sons and pupils, through their short and glorious lives, amply justified the purity and the patriotism of their parent's aspirations.

These patrician liberals, from the very commencement of their public career, evinced an uncompromising zeal for the rights and liberties of the people of Rome. Rising above the prejudices of class and station, they struggled hard in the cause of truth and honesty, against the increasing despotism and sordid avarice of their own corrupted order.

Tiberius Gracchus, on his return out of Spain, had felt

his sympathies roused by a spectacle of desolation and misery presented in the country now called the Campagna, and in Etruria; and he boldly called for the appropriate remedy, an Agrarian law, to recover for the people their right and property in public lands, which had been gradually wrenched from them by the patricians, through a system of legal chicanery and barefaced tyranny all but unequalled in the history of nations. To feel the political importance, or to understand the justice of this measure, requires a profound knowledge of the condition of the Roman state, and of the working of its institutions; but examples may be found nearer to our own age and country of the violence ever provoked in high quarters, by any, the lightest attacks on exclusive privileges and usurpations, when they assume a pecuniary shape, which will render the boldness of Tiberius, and his danger in attempting it, readily intelligible.

In the struggle that ensued, Tiberius was successful; and the senate was compelled to yield that to fear, which they had long and obstinately denied to justice; but the patricians, incapable of forgiveness, turned the virtues which sought to serve the republic, into accusations of an intention to destroy it.

Taking upon himself the office of executor to Attalus, king of Pergamus, Tiberius again provoked the anger of the patricians, by rescuing, from the plunder of a faction, the treasures bequeathed to the people. These traits of a prompt and generous sympathy bear ample testimony to the probity of his early education, developed and nurtured by maternal sensibility. But virtues at variance with the spirit of the age in which they are exhibited, receive their reward in calumny and misrepresentation; and it was not difficult among a rude and ignorant people to find a colourable pretext, to justify the destruction of a political rival, as a public enemy. Tiberius Gracchus perished by assassination, a sacrifice to a reforming spirit, for which the society in which he acted was not prepared.

Caius Gracchus was of another character and temper. Roused, and not crushed by the murder of his brother, he brought to the task of vengeance, powers and energies

capable of the highest efforts for the public good. Vast in his designs, petulant, though deviceful in their execution, he sought to overleap the obstacles to reformation, with which he disdained all compromise.

For some time after his brother's death, indeed, he remained silent, and abstracted from public affairs; not improbably, with the view to make his subsequent interference in the popular behalf more desired; but when at length he was aroused by the call of private friendship, and threw himself with all his energies into the public cause, he beat down, in a long suite of successful legislation, the sources of aristocratic power, by controlling its plunder. Justice and utility were the joint objects of his innovations; and from the overthrow of the patrician monopoly of the administration of the law, down to the establishment of mile-stones to measure the roads, all his efforts were worthy of a better age.

Meantime, the senate, incapable of opposing him, sought to defeat his measures by exaggerated parody, by outbidding him in the market of popular favour, and at the same time casting a ridicule on reform itself. In the height of his power and popularity, he evinced the purity of his motives by the modicity of his demands: and, when foiled by his enemies, and driven into a sort of honourable exile, he justified himself, by a prompt and noble obedience, from the imputation of factious opposition and contempt for law.

The patricians, however, unable to prevail against him by constitutional means, as usual, had recourse to violence; and a second murder and a second martyrdom deprived Rome of the possibility of an equal and durable constitution. Power became again centered in the few,—oppression was again the lot of the many. An aristocracy, incapable of submitting to the government of the people, or of governing its own passions, was reinstated in its original dominion; and the liberty of Rome sank in the tomb of the last of its champions.

After the death of both her sons, Cornelia, the devoted mother, remained alone in her sublime desolation, a more magnificent monument of moral grandeur, than that splendid trophy, raised in her own lifetime to her glory,

and inscribed by reverential contemporaries with the simple name—

CORNELIA MATER GRACCHORUM.

This great woman long survived her afflicting losses; immediately on the murder of Caius, she withdrew from the shores of the Tiber, (to whose waters the bleeding bodies of both her children had been contemptuously committed,) and fixed her melancholy retreat near to Misenum, where the greatest and most eminent personages both of Greece and Italy resorted, to make their offerings of esteem, to invoke the lessons of her experience, and to revere in her person the lost virtues of ancient Rome. To their interrogations concerning the past she is said to have replied with perspicacity and eloquence, and with a thorough knowledge of events; and travellers from distant climes retraced their homeward steps in pride, to relate at their own hearths, that they had seen and conversed with the mother of the Gracchi.

The star of Cornelia's genius long left its luminous track behind it; the mothers of Rome were wont to cite her sayings as moral precepts; and Quinctilian quotes her epistles, as among the purest specimens of the style extant in his time.

As the Romans became rich with plunder, as their wealth and civilisation introduced a taste for arts and science, the women, keeping pace with the spirit of the times, sought to extend their scale of education by their own efforts. The age which followed upon that of Cornelia and her contemporaries, was distinguished by the literary taste and intellectual cultivation of the Roman women. Cicero mentions with the highest encomiums several women, whose acquirements in literature, philosophy, and eloquence, did honour to their sex, and placed them in proud competition with their male contemporaries. Among these, one was brought forward by the force of circumstances, whose oratory has much of the character which distinguished his own, and whose conduct was at least equal in moral courage with that of Brutus. This was Hortensia, the daughter of the celebrated Hortensius, one of the most distinguished orators of his age.

The triumviri, wanting large sums of money for the prosecution of their sanguinary contests and civil wars, and finding insurmountable difficulties in raising the necessary supplies, drew up a list of fourteen hundred of the richest women in Rome, and imposed on them a tax, to be paid by the sacrifice of their property and personal valuables. The women resisted the tyrannic exaction to the uttermost of their powers, and by the most urgent appeal to the justice of the triumviri endeavoured to elude the imposition. But the destroyers of Roman liberty had no sentiment of justice, as they had no feeling of mercy; and the women, having exhausted every method to evade so great an innovation of the law, resolved to address themselves to public opinion.

The first women in Rome, therefore, assembling in great numbers, and having chosen Hortensia for their speaker, they proceeded to the Forum, where the awful sovereigns of Rome were seated in all the pomp of their sanguinary power, affecting to administer that justice, which these supplicants came to prove had been most contemptuously violated in their own instance.

Such a procession, so fair, so noble, so draped, as were these illustrious petitioners for rights, may be imagined to have formed one of the many models, which genius has immortalized in those basso-relievos, whose fragmentary beauties are still gloated on by the *virtu* of modern ages: for who can doubt that the sculptors of antiquity owe the finer touches of their art to a nature exquisitely developed, which lent them its inspiration?

Before this great historical picture, it is impossible not to pause. The Roman Forum, (the scene of the action, now so well known to European posterity by its august and melancholy ruins,) was then a valley of groves and fountains, of temples and rostrums, where every monument was a record of public virtue, and every statue the effigy of a patriot. The Forum was not then crowned with the marble miracles, raised by self-glorifying power, or by the base adulation of a prostrate people. The temples of the deified Cæsars, the arches of Septimius Severus and of Constantine, the column of Phocas, and other monuments, which in after-times graced and disgraced this

noble site, then slept in the unhewn masses of their quarries; nor had the savage fanaticism and cowardly ignorance of Popes and of Preux, (the devastating Gregories and Guiscards,) yet buried in indiscriminate ruin the glorious monuments of all ages and all epochs in the history of mind.

By whatever point Hortensia and her noble band approached the tribunal of the triumviri, objects the most cheering and ennobling must have met their eyes, and encouraged their enterprise. Such were the temple of Concord, the antique Tabernum, (where Virginius snatched the knife which was to save the honour of his daughter,) the column at which the Horatii had hung the spoils of their vanquished enemies, and, above all, the exquisite temple of Vesta, that temple where the Palladium was preserved, and the sacred fire fed, and at whose altars none but women served. The adjoining palace, too, where the vestal priestesses dwelt, who were sacred in the eyes of the people, as the Palladium consigned to their guardianship, must have had an inspiriting influence on this band of female patriots.

Lepidus and Antony received Hortensia in all the terrific array of armed power, surrounded by guards and lictors, and seated on a raised tribunal, glittering with eagles and fasces! But the eloquent champion of her sex's rights stood undismayed in her moral courage, before this awful exhibition of physical force; and pronounced a speech, which for its pure Latinity and eloquence of thought, has been cited by Appian as not unworthy of Cicero himself. The triumviri heard her with insolent impatience, and ordered their lictors to drive away the women with brutal ignominy; but the people, who had followed the procession in multitudes, became indignant at the insult offered to one who spoke their own sentiments. With a spirit they then but seldom exhibited, they came forward simultaneously to protect her; and the triumviri, dreading the popular movement, and fearing to proceed, broke up the sitting.

But the demand of the triumviri was modified; and four hundred Roman ladies only, the wealthiest in Rome, instead of fourteen hundred, were called on to submit to the

imposition. These great ladies were the relations or partisans of the power of the day; their submission, too, was voluntary, and their contributions the free-will offerings of female corruption, to uphold a system of absolutism, always favourable to undue and exclusive female influence, and opposed to female rights and virtue.

The decline of domestic affection in Rome had commenced with the introduction of Asiatic luxuries and Asiatic manners, and with the libertinism of the patricians. The utter dissolution of morals among the men of the privileged class, inevitably reacted (as in more modern times) upon the conduct and condition of the women.

Power and politics interfered to break the holiest ties, and to outrage the most sacred affections. Pompey consented to repudiate his own wife Antistia, to please Sylla by marrying his daughter Emilia, (the wife of another man, who was the victim of this political expediency;) and her honest mother died in consequence of a broken heart. Catiline is said to have murdered his own son, that he might possess himself of his beautiful mistress, Aurelia Orestilla. Julius Cæsar alone, that illustrious *roué* of antiquity, (who demanded such perfection in his own wife,) was enough to corrupt the morals of every wife in the capital, where his example was strengthened by all that valour, genius, wit, celebrity, and power could bestow.

His pretended descent from that goddess whom he considered his tutelar deity, seemed almost authorized by his whole libertine life; and he who carried off Posthumia from Sulpicius, Lollia from Gabinius, Tertulla from M. Crassus, and he who was suspected to have successfully wooed and won that beautiful pupil of a stoic school, the sister of Cato, and mother of Brutus, well merited the sarcasm of some of his own soldiers, who exclaimed in his hearing, on his triumphant return to Rome, from his victories in Gaul:—"Romans, hide your wives: here comes the reckless voluptuary, who corrupted the women of Gaul with the money he carried off from their husbands."*

But still, in the midst of all this licensed depravity, Rome was not destitute of good and eminent women.

* Segur.

The women of Cicero's family enjoyed the highest place in public consideration, distinguished by great virtues and eminent talents. Helvia, the mother of the father of his country, was likened to Cornelia; and his wife's sister, Fabia, was raised by her purity and virtues to the highest rank which Rome could confer, on the most eminent of her female citizens. She was admitted into the still revered order of the priestesses of Vesta.

NOTES.

NOTES.

Note 1. Chapter I. p. 21.

This work being altogether founded on an *à posteriori* argument, a consideration of the causes influencing the intellectual and moral characteristics of the sexes forms no part of its design. It may, however, be as well, in order to prevent misapprehension, to state, that nothing more is arrogated for the female than is admitted by all writers on physiology: a greater mobility of fibre, dependent on the softer constitution of her structure—a more rapid, delicate sensibility, and a wider range of sympathies, corresponding in variety and in intensity with the exalted vital character of the general organization. In the relation of these peculiarities to an external world, there is no ground for asserting either the superiority or the inferiority of one sex over the other. In each there is a comparative adaptation to some particular modes of action, and a relative unfitness for others; and these differences give to each sex a specific value. This is sufficiently marked, as far as concerns the locomotive functions, in the manners of all societies, where food is tolerably abundant, and where civilisation has made some notable progress: the division of labour between the sexes, necessary for their mutual benefit, bearing a near approach to the degree of force and of address with which each is endowed. In all that concerns the voluntary and intellectual functions, the truth is less generally allowed; and when it has been proved or imagined that woman has been less successful in some departments of literature, or

some other particular manifestations of mind, than her master, the inference usually drawn to her disadvantage is general. A more careful examination, will, however, show that the intellectual, like the bodily peculiarities of sex, are complimental, and that, in respect to these also, the dependence of each sex on the other is mutual. There are occasions in life where the promptitude of female apprehension is in especial request; there are others in which the slower and more syllogistic reaction of the male is preferable. The prevailing habit, also, of forethought, and the consequent postponement of present to future objects, arising out of the maternal feelings, forms a decided contrast to the more impetuous and self-willed indulgence in impulse, peculiar to man, and is calculated to act beneficially on the destinies of the species. The perfection of human reason, and of human action, it is therefore assumed, is a middle term, resulting from the just developement and mutual influence of the two sexes; and wherever either the agency of the one or the other is degraded or rejected, civilisation must necessarily suffer.

By placing in prominent relief the differences which distinguish the attributes of the sexes, and keeping out of sight what is common to both, it is not difficult to draw a fanciful line between their duties and their destinies in society; and this is what the world has hitherto done to the disadvantage of woman. Mary Wolstoncraft, and some others, by reversing the process, have arrived at an opposite conclusion, equally false, if not equally injurious. It is, however, an undeniable truth, that there is a common nature, a common humanity in the male and female, much more influential than any differences assignable to the respective organizations: both sexes are, for the most part, organizators, built upon a common principle, governed by common laws, generally speaking, moved by common desires, and subjected to common necessities; their rights in all these respects are therefore equal; their claims to protection before the law, for property and person, equal; their claims to a full developement of their intelligence, by education (each according to its own faculties), equal.

The author of these volumes, in advocating the cause of her own sex, has no desire of "railing the seal off the

bond" of nature, and remoulding both into an androgynous political unity. Still less does she see the emancipation of woman in any exemption from that holiest law of nature, which has been justly ranked as forming, with property, the two legs of society. On the contrary, she holds the sacro-sanctity of wedlock to be the only possible foundation for common justice to the "weaker sex," and for rational happiness and security to "the stronger."

Note 2. New Holland.

"*Human nature could go no lower.*"—p. 24.

Of New Holland, and its organic peculiarities, Dr. Pritchard thus speaks in his researches into the Physical History of Mankind.

"This great region may be said to contain within itself a particular creation, an organized world of its own. South Africa and the Magellanic countries differ in their productions from the rest of the continents, of which they are prolongations; but in Terra Australis, living nature displays a peculiar type and new forms, which seem to deviate from the laws of co-existence, generally regarded as universal conditions of life. Botanists have observed in the vegetation of this country a peculiar physiognomy. It is equally striking, that many tribes of animals, indigenous to the same regions, though differing from each other, display some remarkable attributes of organization, which may be looked on as common characters."

On the subject of the paradoxal animals of this region, the same author quotes from Lessou, a French naturalist. "Rien, ailleurs, ne peut donner l'idée des êtres singuliers qu'on a nommé paradoxaux, et qui sont l'omithoshynque et l'echidné. Le premier à corps couvert de poils, à bec de canard, à pieds garnis d'érgots venereux, pondant des œufs, semble être une créature fantastique, jetée sur le globe, pour renverser par sa presence tous les systémes adneis sur l'histoire naturelle; sur on peut soutenir avec tout autant de raison, qu'elle appartient aux quadrupedes aux oiseaux, ou aux reptiles."

Again: "The birds of this region vary in the colours

of their feathers, but are generally remarkable for some singularity of structure or plumage. Thus, instead of the swan of other countries, of a spotless white, New Holland has one of a deep black; and it has black cocatoos, replacing the white cocatoos of the Moluccas. The most frightful reptiles are found in the same climate; the poison of some is fatal in a few minutes. . . . Numerous lizards, and different species of skinques, and of agami, abound in New Holland; the most striking are the gigantic black and yellow skinques, and those singular saurians, the phylluvi, having leaf-shaped tails. . . . The chelonians, the mothescæ, the insects, the zoophytes of Terra Australia, present phenomena of singular form and organization, which are scarcely less remarkable."

With regard to the vegetation of New Holland, M. Lessou, in his "Tableau Physique" of that country, tells us that all the plants have a unique character, consisting in a dry, rough, slender, aromatic foliage, with almost uniformly simple leaflets. Throughout nearly the whole of the rest of the earth, the mimosæ have their leaves composite, while to New Holland alone is it given to produce a great many species with a simple leaf. . . . The forests have, very generally, a sad and wintry aspect, fatiguing to the sight; the foliage is monotonous, and the fungous bark, detaching itself from the branches, floats on the wind in long streamers, &c.

Note 3.

"*The Babylon of their own proudest times.*"—p. 35.

On this "greatest city that the sun ever saw," as Pausanius styles Babylon, the pen of virtu, of history, and of antiquity, have been employed for more than two thousand years, down to the present day, and Diodorus, Thrabo, Herodotus, Pliny, Lucien, Constantine the Great, St. Jerome, with many others, in the antique times, pagan and Christian, while they are florid in the expression of their wonder and admiration at its grandeur, and regrets for its desolation, have done honour to the genius that raised it, and borne their successful testimony to the capa-

bility of a female legislatress and sovereign ruler of a great people, to conceive great designs, and to encourage the noble arts, by which such conceptions can alone be realized. Diodorus Siculus, who described the magnificent buildings of Babylon as being decayed and in ruins in his time, (fifty years before the birth of Christ) leads us, however, to infer, that part of the unrivalled city was then still inhabited, and that it was then an object of antiquarian research and great historical interest. His description of its ancient state, (so well known to the classical reader) is sufficiently curious and circumstantial to excuse its insertion in pages, which, though traced by an unlearned hand, are still consecrated to the influence of the illustrious women of antiquity.

"Semiramis," says this arduous historian of her ruined towers, "Semiramis was naturally of an high and aspiring spirit, ambitious to excel all her predecessors in glorious actions, and therefore employed all her thoughts about the building of a city in the province of Babylon; and to this end, having provided architects, artists, and all other necessaries for the work, she got together two millions of men out of all parts of the empire, to be employed in building of the city. It was so built, as that the river Euphrates ran through the middle of it, and she compassed it round with a wall of three hundred and sixty furlongs in circuit, and adorned with many stately turrets, and such was the state and grandeur of the work, that the walls were of that breadth, as that six chariots abreast might be driven together upon them. The height was such, as exceeded all men's belief that heard of it, (as Ctesias the Cnidian relates.) But Clitarchus, and those who afterwards went over with Alexander into Asia, have written that the walls were three hundred and sixty-five furlongs, the queen making them of that compass, to the end that the furlongs should be as many in number as the days of the year. They were of brick, cemented with brimstone—in height, as Ctesias says, fifty orgyas, (each six feet,) but as some of the later writers report, but fifty cubits only, and that the breadth was but a little more than what would allow two chariots to be driven in front. There were two hundred and fifty turrets, in height and thickness, proportion-

able to the largeness of the wall. It is not to be wondered at, that there were so few towers upon a wall of so great a circuit, being that, in many places round the city, there were deep morasses, so that it was judged to no purpose to raise turrets there, where they were so naturally fortified. Between the wall and the houses, there was a space left round the city of two hundred feet.

"That the work might be the more speedily despatched, to each of her friends was allotted a furlong, with an allowance of all expenses necessary for their several parts, and commanded all should be finished in a year's time, which being diligently perfected with the queen's approbation, she then made a bridge over the narrowest part of the river, five furlongs in length. On either side of the river, she raised a bank as broad as the wall, and with great cost drew it out in length an hundred furlongs. She built likewise two palaces at each end of the bridge on the banks of the river, where she might have a prospect over the whole city, and make her passage, as by keys, to the most convenient places in it, as she had occasion. And whereas Euphrates runs through the midst of Babylon, making its course to the south, the palaces lie the one on the east and the other on the west side of the river, both built at exceeding cost and expense. For that on the west had a high and stately wall, made of well-burnt bricks, sixty furlongs in compass, (seven miles and a half;) within this was drawn another of a round circumference, upon which were portrayed on the bricks, before they were burnt, all sorts of living creatures, as if it were to the life, laid with great art in curious colours. This wall was in circuit forty furlongs, three hundred bricks thick, and in height, (as Ctesias says), fifty orgyas, or one hundred yards, upon which were turrets one hundred and forty yards high. The third and most inward wall immediately surrounded the palace, thirty furlongs in compass, and far surmounted the middle wall both in height and thickness, and on this wall and towers were represented the shapes of all sorts of living creatures, artificially represented in most lively colours. Especially was represented a general hunt of all sorts of wild beasts, each four cubits high, and upwards; amongst these was to be seen

Semiramis on horseback, striking a leopard through with a dart; and next to her, her husband Ninus in close fight with a lion, piercing him with his lance. To this palace, likewise, she built three gates, under which were apartments of brass for entertainments, into which passages were opened by a certain engine. This palace far excelled that on the other side of the river, both in greatness and adornments. For the outmost wall of that, (namely, on the west,) made of well-burnt brick, was but thirty furlongs in compass. When the river was turned aside into a reservoir, and a vault built across its old bed, the stream was suffered to flow over the work in its old channel, so that Semiramis could go from one palace to the other by this vault, without passing over the river. She made likewise two brazen gates, at either end of the vault, which continued to the time of the Persian Empire.

"In the middle of the city she built a Temple to Jupiter, whom the Babylonians call Belus, of which, since writers differ among themselves, and the work is now wholly decayed through length of time, there is nothing that can with certainty be related concerning it, yet it is apparent, that it was of exceeding great height, and that by the advantage of it, the Chaldean astrologers exactly observed the setting and rising of the stars. The whole was built of brick, cemented with brimstone, with great art and cost. Upon the top was placed three statues of beaten gold, of Jupiter, Juno, and Rhea, with other splendid vessels, tables, and ornaments of gold and precious stones, weighing altogether about six thousand Babylonish talents; but all these the Persian kings sacrilegiously carried away, and length of time has either altogether consumed or much defaced the palaces, and the other structures, so that, at this day, but a small part of this Babylon is inhabited, and the greatest part which lay within the walls is turned into pasture and tillage.

"There was also a hanging garden, (as it is called), near the citadel, not built by Semiramis, but by a later prince, called Cyrus, for the sake of a courtezan, who, being a Persian (as they say) by birth, and coveting meadows on mountain tops, desired the king, by an artificial plantation, to imitate the land in Persia. This garden was four hun-

dred foot square, and the ascent up to it was as to the top of a mountain, and had buildings and apartments out of one into another, like a theatre. Under the steps to the ascent, were built arches one above another, rising gently by degrees, which supported the whole plantation. The highest arch upon which the platform of the garden was laid, was fifty cubits high, and the garden itself was surrounded with battlements and bulwarks. The walls were made very strong, built at no small charge and expense, being two and twenty feet thick, and every sally-port ten feet wide. Over the several stories of this fabric were laid beams, and summers of huge massy stones, each sixteen feet long, and four broad. The roof over all these was first covered with reeds, daubed with abundance of brimstone, (or bitumen;) then, upon them, was laid double tiles, pargeted together with a hard and durable mortar, and over them all, was a covering, with sheets of lead, that the wet which drenched through the earth might not rot the foundation. Upon all these, was laid earth of a convenient depth, sufficient for the growth of the greatest trees. When the soil was laid even and smooth, it was planted with all sorts of trees, which, both for beauty and greatness might delight the spectators. The arches (which stood one above another, and by that means darted light sufficient one into another), had in them many stately rooms of all kinds, and for all purposes. But there was one that had in it certain engines, whereby it drew plenty of water out of the river, through certain conduits and conveyances from the platform of the garden, and nobody without was the wiser, or knew what was done. The garden (as we said before) was built in later ages."—*Diodorus Siculus*, book ii. c. i.

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